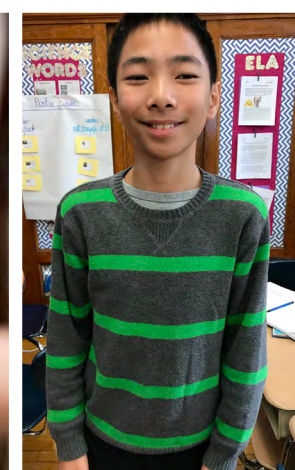


Identifying and Supporting Newcomer Students



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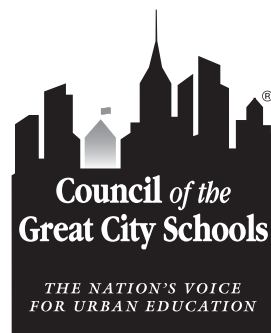
Identifying and Supporting Newcomer Students

Prepared by:
The Council of the Great City Schools

In collaboration with:
The Research Institute for the Study of Language in
Urban Society at the City University of New York

Authors:
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October 2025



About the Council

The Council of the Great City Schools is the only national organization exclusively representing the needs of urban public schools. Composed of 81 large-city school districts, its mission is to promote the cause of urban education and to advocate for inner-city students through legislation, research, and media relations. The organization also provides a network for school districts sharing common problems to exchange information and to collectively address new challenges as they emerge in order to deliver the best possible education for urban youth.

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About the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society at the City University of New York

The central mission of the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society is to investigate those research questions that are at the nexus of language and the urban environment, especially in New York City. Basic and applied research is conducted on: structural questions, approached from a variety of theoretical viewpoints, associated with the language of urban dwellers, especially but not limited to those who are bilingual or bidialectal; social, and educational issues associated with the language of urban dwellers, with special emphasis on bilingual and bidialectal communities and their language-related strengths and needs; the language and language-learning profile of students at the elementary, secondary and college levels, especially at CUNY and in the NYC public schools, and on the progress of these students in the acquisition of English as well as in the strengthening and development of their native languages and other modern languages; the acquisition of academic literacy skills in English by all students, but especially by students whose native base is another language or another variety of English; the acquisition of academic literacy skills in the home languages of emergent bilinguals, leading to full bilingualism built on knowledge and skill in both the home language and English.

Table of Contents

Contributors.....	viii
Project Origin and Purpose.....	2
Document Organization	3
PART I. Background.....	6
Who Are Newcomers and SLIFE.....	6
How New Arrivals Occur	6
The Role and Responsibilities of Public Schools in the United States.....	9
Newcomer Students	9
Legal Obligations: Access to Public Education	14
The Challenge of Characterizing Newcomers Holistically	16
PART II. District Considerations for Identifying and Serving Newcomers	21
STEP 1: Articulate the Purpose for Identifying Newcomers.....	21
Purpose for Identifying Newcomers.....	21
Reasons NOT to Identify Students as Newcomers or SLIFE	24
STEP 2: Determine Newcomer Needs to Address and Responses to the Identified Needs....	27
Districtwide Investment	31
STEP 3: Newcomer and SLIFE Placement.....	35
Program-related Questions for Placement	35
PART III. Data Collection Instrument and Protocols.....	37
Getting Started: Educational Background Questionnaire (EBQ)	37
District Protocols	37
Candidates for Educational Background Questionnaire.....	39
Supporting Newcomer Families.....	42
PART IV. Protocols for EBQ Administration	46
District Resources for EBQ Administration	46
Preparing Staff for EBQ Administration	49

PART V. Educational Background Questionnaire	53
Overview of the Questionnaire	53
Administering the Questionnaire	54
Educational Background Questionnaire	55
Section 1: Introduction	58
Section 2: Language Background Information	58
Section 3: Experience with English	59
Section 4: Technology	60
Section 5: Educational History	61
Section 6: Out-of-School Activities & Wraparound Supports	63
Part VI. Planning to Use an EBQ in a Newcomer Screening Process	66
References	71
Appendix 1. Script for Introducing the Educational Background Questionnaire	75
Appendix 2. Educational Background Questionnaire Worksheet	76
Council Member Districts	82



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Contributors

The Council of the Great City Schools convened a working group comprising English learner program administrators and welcome center staff from member districts, in addition to consultants with expertise in designing and administering educational background questionnaires (EBQs) and interviews. This group played a key role in shaping the development of the associated considerations and provided valuable feedback throughout the process.

The *Educational Background Questionnaire* included in this document was piloted in several Council-member districts. Pilot coordinators and intake managers in these districts contributed meaningful insights that informed the refinement of both the questionnaire and the administration protocol.

We sincerely thank all contributors for generously sharing their time and expertise.

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Project Origin and Purpose

English learners (ELs) are a diverse group of students, covering a wide range of academic and social realities. Newcomers are no exception. Schools are entrusted with meeting the needs of all students, including the newest arrivals to the United States (U.S.). With increasing and persistent inquiries from school districts on how to meet the transitional needs of newcomer students while ensuring appropriate educational placement, the Council of the Great City Schools first sought to identify which students were considered *newcomers*. This step was crucial in determining their specific needs, which are distinct from those of other student groups, such as English learners in general.

Results of a 2021 survey on newcomers in the Great City Schools revealed a wide array of practices implemented by districts to designate students as newcomers. Most included considerations for time in the U.S., while some districts only considered the level of English proficiency. Several districts considered interruptions in schooling for further identification of students as *Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education* (SLIFE).

In light of such disparate identification practices across Council-member districts, the Council's Task Force on English Learners and Bilingual Education recommended developing guidance for an assets-based approach to understand the educational experience and knowledge that newly arrived students and students with potential interruptions in formal education (i.e., students often called "newcomers") possess for programming and placement decisions. A working group of Council-member districts was assembled for this purpose.

Early in the group's work, it was decided that the guidance would need to be paired with an appropriate screening instrument to improve upon existing ones. Already experienced with developing and validating educational background questionnaires (EBQs), notably for the State of New York, the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society (RISLUS), based at the City University of New York (CUNY), was identified as a collaborator to develop the screening instrument.

This document, and accompanying educational background questionnaire, was jointly developed by the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society (RISLUS), based at the City University of New York (CUNY), in collaboration with the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS).

Document Organization

Responding to the needs of newcomer students in an appropriate and timely manner requires understanding their educational experiences, especially related to content knowledge and multilingual development. This document offers considerations to help districts determine:

- a) how to define and identify newcomer students;
- b) what educational and language background information is needed for educational decision-making;
- c) how to obtain the needed information; and
- d) how to use the obtained information to inform program and instructional placement, as well as wraparound supports.

Moreover, this document can help districts consider how they collect data and whether the systems in place continue to be the most effective in yielding accurate and actionable information to support newcomer students.

The document is divided into six parts as follows:

- **PART I** provides background information on key terminology and the rationale behind the considerations. Understanding terms such as "newcomer students" and "SLIFE" (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education) is essential for navigating the document. This background also offers framing for the considerations presented in the following sections.
- **PART II** outlines three steps for determining a newcomer definition to guide local responses, such as the development of specialized programs or services.
 - **Step 1** describes the purpose of understanding students' educational backgrounds and experiences before arriving in the United States.
 - **Step 2** outlines how districts would use information about students' prior experiences to create a districtwide response to support newcomers and SLIFE. The rationale for this step is to ensure the information gathered is asset-oriented to help create appropriate support structures.
 - **Step 3** focuses on important pedagogical considerations for placing newcomers in programs and services, ensuring their educational needs are met most effectively.

- **PART III** provides information on what to gather and how to gather it in order to accurately and expeditiously identify newcomers who may require unique and additional support and services. This information guides decision-making regarding policy, programming, and instructional support, ensuring that appropriate resources are provided to meet students' needs.
- **PARTS IV and V** present the considerations and protocols for administering an educational background questionnaire (EBQ) as part of a newcomer screening process, along with a sample EBQ.
- **PART VI** concludes the document with guidance on how to plan for and implement a screening process that incorporates an EBQ.

PART I

Background



Identifying and Supporting
Newcomer Students

PART I

Background

Who Are Newcomers and SLIFE

From the very beginnings of public education in the United States (U.S.), schools—particularly in major cities—have embraced newly arrived children and their families. In more recent years, urban public schools have welcomed families from Cuba, Haiti, Guatemala, Vietnam, Ukraine, Sudan, and many other nations, offering them a place of refuge, opportunity, and hope for a brighter future. As these families settle in and build their lives, they enrich the nation’s fabric with their distinct contributions, shaping its culture and fortifying its strength.²

How New Arrivals Occur

Journeys to the United States occur through a wide range of ways. Immigrants are permitted to enter the U.S. legally through a variety of programs. (See Table 1.) In fact, over 80 different types of immigrant visas are granted to enter the country, and the U.S. welcomes thousands of refugees each year and provides Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or grants asylum to thousands of others.³ These varied programs are often associated with different experiences and needs in school, a reason for identifying students who may require specialized programming and support. Despite their legal entry, stability remains uncertain for many—visas can expire, TPS designations shift, and humanitarian protections often lack permanence.

2 Casserly, M. (2023, March). *Great city schools step up to meet the needs of refugee children*. Council of the Great City Schools. https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/domain/35/publication%20docs/CGCS_Welcoming%20Refugees_v4.pdf

3 Ward, N., & Batalova, J. (2023, June 15). *Refugees and asylees in the United States*. Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugees-and-asylees-united-states>. In FY 2022, over 36,000 individuals were granted asylum based on data from the Office of Homeland Security Statistics (U.S. Department of Homeland Security).

Table 1. Major Immigration Programs for Newly Arrived Students and Families

Program	General Qualifications	Implications for Students and Potential Needs	Key Conditions and Employment Authorization ⁴
Dependent Visa ⁵	Children of visa-holding parents (workers, students, etc.)	More stability while visa holder maintains status, but uncertainty if visa is lost.	Must adhere to the visa requirements, including living with the primary visa holder. Usually requires a separate work authorization (such as an Employment Authorization Document).
Asylum and United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) ⁶	Individuals, including children and families, fleeing persecution in home country (e.g., Congolese refugees)	More stability once asylum is granted, but high emotional burden from past trauma and legal uncertainties.	Must maintain status by complying with the terms of their protection. Eligible to work immediately upon approval of status.
Humanitarian Parole ⁷ (Case-by-Case)	Individuals, including children and families, with urgent humanitarian needs (e.g., Ukrainian, Afghan, and Venezuelan parole programs) who would otherwise be ineligible for admission to the United States, on a case-by-case basis	Highly unstable—status is temporary and does not guarantee long-term stay. High emotional stress from displacement and uncertainty.	Must leave the U.S. by the end of the authorized period unless an extension is granted. Work authorization is not automatically granted; applicants may need to apply separately for work permits.
Temporary Protected Status (TPS) ⁸ (Designated Nations)	Eligible nationals from designated crisis-affected countries (e.g., Haiti, Venezuela) already in the United States by a specified date	Instability due to uncertain renewals; potential for long stays if TPS is renewed. Emotional strain from family displacement and fear of losing status.	Must re-register during the designated periods and remain in compliance with the conditions set by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Authorized to work during the designated period of protection.

4 An Employment Authorization Document (EAD) may function as an identity document for some, with no age restrictions for obtaining an EAD. Such an authorization, therefore, does not supersede laws concerning the employment of minors. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2025, February 26). *Chapter 2—Eligibility requirements*. Retrieved February 28, 2025, from <https://www.uscis.gov/policy-manual/volume-10-part-a-chapter-2#footnote-1>

5 U.S. Department of State. (2025). *U.S. visas*. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html>

6 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2024, October 22). *Refugees*. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/refugees>

7 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2025, January 24). *Humanitarian or significant public benefit parole for aliens outside the United States*. Retrieved February 28, 2025, from https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/humanitarian_parole

8 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2025, February 26). *Temporary protected status*. Retrieved February 28, 2025, from <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status>

Illustrating Unique Experiences and Needs: Refugees and Asylees

Some new arrivals, specifically refugees and asylees, are fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries.

- A **refugee** is a person located outside the United States who is of special humanitarian concern to the United States and has been persecuted or has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and is admissible to the United States. (See section 101(a)(42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.)⁹
- An **asylee** is a person who is already present in the United States or is seeking admission at a port of entry because of a well-founded fear of persecution.¹⁰

Refugees are required to apply for Lawful Permanent Resident (“Green Card”) status one year after being admitted. Asylees may apply for Lawful Permanent Resident status one year after they are granted asylum.¹¹

The process to obtain refugee or asylee status in the U.S. is long and complicated.

Refugee Process

To apply for refugee status through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), individuals must first receive a referral from one of the following sources: the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a U.S. embassy, certain non-governmental organizations, or eligible family members already residing in the United States. Every year, the President, after consulting with Congress and government agencies, sets a refugee admissions ceiling and determines which groups or nationalities qualify as priorities based on humanitarian concerns, family reunification needs, or special U.S. interests.¹²

To qualify as a refugee, applicants must demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group, and they usually must be outside their home country (though exceptions exist for certain cases). After referral, they complete an application, provide detailed biographic, background, and security information, and attend an in-person interview with a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer abroad, who assesses whether they meet the legal definition of a refugee under U.S. immigration law. If approved, they undergo a medical exam, receive cultural orientation, and work with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to arrange travel, which can take several months to over a year, depending on circumstances. Upon arrival, refugees can work immediately, receive resettlement assistance, and must apply for a “Green Card” (formally known as *Permanent Resident Card*) after one year. They can also petition to bring spouses and children within two years of arrival.¹³

(continued on next page)

9 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2015, November 12). *Refugees and asylum*. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-asylum>

10 Ibid.

11 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2024, October 22). *Refugees*. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/refugees>

12 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2024, November 22). *The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) consultation and worldwide processing priorities*. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/usrap>

13 U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2024, October 22). *Refugees*. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/refugees>

Asylum Process

Asylum-seekers face multi-year delays as they wait for their asylum interviews and hearings. After filing asylum applications with USCIS, they often wait over six years for an interview with an asylum officer. Those seeking asylum in immigration court wait an average of four years for their final hearing before an immigration judge. At the start of 2024, both the USCIS asylum office and the immigration courts had backlogs of over one million asylum applications each.¹⁴

These long wait times due to asylum office and immigration court backlogs have a devastating impact on individuals seeking asylum and their families. The legal limbo leaves them in fear of deportation. Families also suffer prolonged separations, as they must wait years for the asylum grants necessary to petition to bring spouses and children to the U.S. Living conditions while waiting for asylum adjudication are often harsh for families. Asylum-seekers face restrictions on work, making it exceedingly difficult to support their families. Moreover, they are generally not eligible for federal public benefits, including cash assistance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Social Security.¹⁵

The Role and Responsibilities of Public Schools in the United States

As one of the first U.S. institutions to welcome newly arrived families and children, public schools play an important role in the integration of immigrant families into U.S. society. The journey from home countries and the adjustment to a new country often result in a host of socioeconomic and social-emotional needs that are important to address for the academic success of children in school. These needs are roughly encapsulated in the use of terminology, such as “newcomers.” It is important to note that *newcomer* is not statutorily defined, nor is the term used consistently across school districts and states.

Newcomer Students

Students new to the U.S., and often called *newcomers*, include individuals who have an immigrant visa, or who may be a refugee or asylee, or even be in limbo awaiting a stable immigrant status (e.g., those who have Temporary Protected Status). The 2016 and 2023 editions of the *Newcomer Toolkit*, published by the U.S. Department of Education, elaborate on the many groups that fall under the umbrella term of *newcomer*.¹⁶

14 Human Rights First. (2024, July 9). *Saving lives, ending inefficiencies*. Retrieved February 26, 2025, from <https://humanrightsfirst.org/library/saving-lives-ending-inefficiencies/>

15 International Rescue Committee. (2024, October 31). *What happens once asylum seekers arrive in the U.S.?* International Rescue Committee. <https://www.rescue.org/article/what-happens-once-asylum-seekers-arrive-us>

16 Office of English Language Acquisition. (2023, June). *Newcomer toolkit*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits/newcomer-toolkit>

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). Some newcomers have experienced interruptions in their formal education due to factors such as displacement, conflict, or unstable living conditions. Frequently referred to as *Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)*, they may struggle with foundational academic skills like literacy and numeracy and require specialized support to navigate school routines and build essential learning skills.

Table 2 lists various terms, referenced or defined federally, related to newly arrived students who may be referred to as “newcomers.” The U.S. Department of Education’s *Newcomer Toolkit* (2023) non-statutorily describes newcomers based on three factors: (1) still learning English (i.e., English learner status), (2) born outside the U.S., and (3) less than three years of school in the U.S. However, state and/or local definitions for “newcomers” may include other considerations. How these factors apply to the various terms is summarized in Table 2. In this document, “newcomer” is used generally to apply to any of the related terms in the table.

Table 2. Federal References to Newly Arrived Students

Term and Definition	English Learner Status	Place of Birth	Time in U.S. Schools
Federal Non-Statutory			
Newcomers. K-12 students born outside the U.S. who have arrived within the last 3 years and are still learning English. An umbrella term including refugees, SLIFE, and voluntary immigrants with varying educational backgrounds. (<i>Newcomer Toolkit</i> , 2023) ¹⁷	Yes	Born outside the U.S.	Less than 3 years
Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). Students with gaps in schooling due to war, displacement, migration, etc. Includes some refugees and other displaced learners. (<i>Newcomer Toolkit</i> , 2023) ¹⁸	Typically ELs; often need literacy in home language and academic support	Generally born outside the U.S.	Varies

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Also called *Students with Interrupted Formal Education* (SIFE). Office of English Language Acquisition. (2023, June). *Newcomer toolkit*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits/newcomer-toolkit>

Table 2. Federal References to Newly Arrived Students, continued

Term and Definition	English Learner Status	Place of Birth	Time in U.S. Schools
Federal Statutory			
Immigrant Children & Youth. Individuals ages 3–21, not born in the U.S., in U.S. schools <3 years. (ESEA) ¹⁹	Yes or No	Born outside the U.S.	Less than 3 years
Recently Arrived English Learners (RAELs). English learners enrolled in U.S. schools for less than 12 months. States can adjust how they are included in accountability systems. (ESEA) ²⁰	Yes	May be U.S.-born or immigrant	Less than 12 months
Refugees/Asylees. Individuals who have been forced to flee their home country due to persecution, war, or violence. Refugees are granted entry before arrival in the U.S.; asylees apply for protection after arrival. (Refugee Act of 1980 / Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)) ²¹	Yes or No	Born outside the U.S.	Varies

Acculturative Stress and Migratory Grief

Edited by: Alejandra Murray, Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Newly arrived students bring diverse backgrounds, strengths, and perspectives to U.S. schools. While they often show great resilience, adjusting to a new cultural and educational environment can still be challenging. These transitions can affect students emotionally and psychologically. Acculturative stress and migratory grief are closely linked, and together they describe the emotional impact of adapting to a new country and culture.

Acculturative stress refers to the normal psychophysiological response to the major life change of migrating and adjusting to a new country and culture. It includes the stress of facing specific migration-related challenges, such as resettlement difficulties, accessing adequate housing and employment, language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and navigating healthcare, education, and legal systems, often without a support network and, in some cases, immigration status uncertainty.

(continued on next page)

¹⁹ Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 et seq. (2015).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2024, October 22). *Refugees*. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/refugees-and-asylum/refugees>

This stress is experienced by the family unit and can manifest emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively, with students experiencing feelings of insecurity, sadness, confusion, anxiety, social withdrawal, and even physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, and more.

Alongside acculturative stress, newcomers often experience migratory grief, a natural emotional response to the many significant losses that can accompany migration.

There are seven core types of migratory grief:

1. **Loss of support network:** The loss of close relationships with family and friends, along with the challenge of building connections in a new country.
2. **Loss of language:** The loss of contact with one's native language when migrating to a country with a different language, as well as the challenge of learning and adapting to a new linguistic environment.
3. **Loss of culture and traditions:** The loss of contact with one's culture, understood as a set of values, customs, beliefs, cuisines, activities, and traditions. Migrants must cope with losing contact with their culture of origin while striving to adapt to the culture of the new country.
4. **Loss of land:** The loss of connection with one's homeland and the effort to adapt to a new geography and climate. Elements such as light, temperature, colors, scents, and landscapes can have a significant emotional impact on migrants.
5. **Loss of social status:** Many migrants must start from scratch and take on precarious jobs, particularly when their professional qualifications are not immediately recognized in the new country.
6. **Loss of group identity:** Includes the loss of connection with one's original identity group and the challenge of finding a new group to belong to. It also involves the potential exposure to prejudice, racism, and xenophobia in the new country.
7. **Loss of physical integrity:** Refers to the physical risks migrants may face when relocating, such as workplace injuries from physically demanding or hazardous jobs, household accidents due to overcrowded living conditions, fear of deportation, mistreatment or abuse (including sexual abuse), dangerous travel conditions, or exposure to unfamiliar diseases.

The grieving process is a normal and expected reaction to these profound losses and plays a crucial role in a migrant's adaptation. Migratory grief often requires a reconstruction of identity, as individuals reconcile their past and present selves in a new cultural and social context. The emotional symptoms of migratory grief, such as deep sadness, anger, fear, and helplessness, often overlap with the emotional burden of acculturative stress.

(continued on next page)

Considerations for Districts and Schools

Educators and school districts must recognize that withdrawal, frustration, and regressive behaviors are part of a normal adjustment process—not signs of mental illness—as newcomers cope with both the stress of adaptation and the grief of loss. To support them effectively, districts should acknowledge acculturative stress and migratory grief as interconnected experiences and provide appropriate assistance. Assistance can include providing a stable and supportive environment, ensuring basic needs are met, and fostering emotional self-regulation. Teachers, counselors, and school staff should be trained to identify these symptoms and provide appropriate support, including offering expressive activities, mindfulness practices, and resources that help students process their grief. By understanding and addressing both acculturative stress and migratory grief, schools can better help immigrant students navigate their adjustment and successfully integrate into their new environment.

When to Refer Newcomers to School Counselors or Specialized Support

- Prolonged sadness that prevents the child from playing or interacting with others
- Frequent, intense outbursts or aggressive behavior
- Frequent, uncontrollable crying episodes
- Excessive worry that affects concentration and academic performance
- Frequent relational problems, including isolation from peers and family
- Intense, highly activating flashbacks
- Serious difficulty sleeping with prolonged periods of insomnia and/or recurrent nightmares about lived experiences
- Disconnection from reality or denial of what happened
- Frequent physical complaints (somatic symptoms)
- Irrational fears of unfamiliar places or people

Source: Summary of *Terapia para Migrantes*²² Presentation to Council of the Great City Schools by Alejandra Murray, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, on May 31, 2024. Murray, A. (2024, May 31). *Key concepts to understand and support immigrant students* [PowerPoint slides].

22 Terapia para Migrantes. (n.d.). *Terapia para Migrantes*. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from <https://www.terapiaparamigrantes.com/>

Legal Obligations: Access to Public Education

“Public school districts may not deny access to an education to any child based on immigration status. Schools must provide all students with equal access to a public elementary and secondary education, regardless of their or their parent’s actual or perceived national origin, citizenship, or immigration status, and determine whether the student is eligible, on the same basis as any other student, to participate in programs supported with local, state, and federal funds.”

– *Dear Colleague Letter: Resources for Ensuring Equal Access to Education for Immigrant Students (January 2025)*

Fortunately, schools do not need to decipher the myriad of immigrant visas and other temporary immigration statuses of children enrolling in schools or their parents. Schools have a legal obligation to serve ELs, migrant students, newcomers, unaccompanied minors, and others.²³ In fact, schools do not ask about immigration status or collect this information. It is unlawful to create barriers to enrolling newcomer students in public K-12 education.²⁴ The U.S. Department of Education has provided legal and non-regulatory guidance and resources to support districts in understanding and meeting their obligations under federal law, including the following:

- **Dear Colleague Letter: Resources for Ensuring Equal Access to Education for Immigrant Students (January 8, 2025).**²⁵ This document describes schools’ responsibilities under existing federal laws to provide equal educational opportunities to immigrant and newcomer students, irrespective of their own or their parents’ immigration status. It highlights key federal protections, including *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), and discusses the importance of language assistance services, inclusive enrollment practices, and accessible communication with families. The document also provides resources from the U.S. Department of Education, such as the *Newcomer Toolkit*²⁶ and *English Learner Family Toolkit*,²⁷ to support educators in addressing the academic, social, and emotional needs of English learners.
- **Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents (January 7, 2015).**²⁸ This document provided guidance on how State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and school districts could meet their responsibilities under federal law to ensure English learners had equal access to quality education. It outlines federal laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA), and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which mandate language support services and prohibit discrimination based on national origin. Although the Dear Colleague Letter was

23 U.S. Department of Education. (2025, January 14). *Equal education opportunities for English learners*. Retrieved February 26, 2025, from <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/civil-rights-laws/race-color-and-national-origin-discrimination/race-color-and-national-origin-discrimination-key-issues/equal-education-opportunities-english>

24 Lhamon, C. E., Rosenfelt, P. H., & Samuels, J. (2014, May 8). *Dear colleague letter: School enrollment procedures*. U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595953.pdf>

25 Cardona, M. (2025, January 8). *Dear colleague letter: Resources for ensuring equal access to education for immigrant students*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/key-policy-letters/dear-colleague-letter-resources-ensuring-equal-access-education-immigrant-students>

26 Office of English Language Acquisition. (2023, June). *Newcomer toolkit*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits/newcomer-toolkit>

27 Office of English Language Acquisition. (2023, September). *English learner family toolkit*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits/family-toolkit>

28 Lhamon, C. E., & Gupta, V. (2015, January 7). *Dear colleague letter: English learner students and limited English proficient parents*. U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>

rescinded in August 2025, these underlying federal laws remain in effect. The Letter served as a non-regulatory interpretation of these laws, offering guidance to help SEAs and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) understand their legal obligations and identify strategies for compliance. SEAs and LEAs retain discretion in determining how to meet these obligations.

- **Dear Colleague Letter: School Enrollment Procedures (May 8, 2014).**²⁹ This document reaffirms that school districts must provide equal access to public education for all children, regardless of their immigration status or that of their parents. It highlights federal protections under Titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the landmark *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) decision, which prohibits schools from denying education to undocumented children. The document warns against enrollment practices that may discourage immigrant families from registering their children and outlines permissible and impermissible enrollment procedures, clarifying that schools cannot require proof of citizenship, a Social Security number, or specific documentation that would exclude undocumented students. It also clarifies that while schools can require proof of residency and age, they must ensure these policies do not unintentionally discriminate against immigrant families. The guidance is intended to help districts interpret federal civil rights laws and foster inclusive educational environments.

Identifying “Immigrant Children and Youth” for Title III Immigrant Subgrants

Under ESEA section 3114(d)(1), State Education Agencies (SEAs) must reserve up to 15 percent of their Title III allotment to award subgrants to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) that have experienced a “significant increase” in the enrollment of immigrant children and youth compared to the previous two fiscal years.³⁰ These subgrants support educational programs for recently arrived students, but eligibility is based solely on the ESEA definition of “immigrant children and youth,” not on immigration status. The statutory definition under ESEA section 3201(5) identifies a student as an *immigrant child or youth* based only on three factors: age (3-21), place of birth (outside of the U.S., the District of Columbia, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico), and length of time enrolled in U.S. schools (less than three academic years).

“Immigrant children and youth” classification does not indicate a student’s legal residency or citizenship status. For example, a student who was born abroad to U.S. citizen parents and recently moved to the United States would meet the ESEA definition of an immigrant child, just as a student who arrived on a visa would. Even though their legal statuses are different, both students would be counted as immigrant children and youth for funding purposes. Since this classification is strictly for educational support and does not require or reveal immigration status, school districts have no reason to ascertain immigration status. Furthermore, under *Plyler v. Doe* (1982), school districts cannot take actions that might discourage students from enrolling, such as requesting immigration documents.

29 Lhamon, C. E., Rosenfelt, P. H., & Samuels, J. (2014, May 8). *Dear colleague letter: School enrollment procedures*. U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595953.pdf>

30 U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition. (2025). *The biennial report to Congress on the implementation of the Title III state formula grant program, school years 2020–22*. Washington, D.C.

The Challenge of Characterizing Newcomers Holistically

Inconsistent definitions of “newcomer” across federal, state, and local agencies—combined with the lack of screening protocols and native-language assessments—have led school districts to develop a wide range of their own procedures to identify the educational backgrounds and support needs of newly arrived students in U.S. schools. Thus, the term “newcomer” encompasses considerable heterogeneity.

The *Newcomer Toolkit* (2023) specifically calls on educators to consider the individual characteristics and experiences of students when making programming and instructional decisions.³¹ Overcoming the challenge of identifying the relevant individual characteristics and experiences of newly arrived students with appropriate processes and instruments is key to making proper instructional placements, equipping educators, and providing relevant support services that lead to success in U.S. schools. Districts have stepped up to the challenge of preparing educators and designing programs and services to address the heterogeneity of needs, building on the rich experiences that newcomers bring.

- **Albuquerque Public Schools** developed the *Newcomer Summer Program* for students in grades 6-12 by leveraging partnerships with Albuquerque’s local refugee resettlement agency, multiple community partners, and funding from various sources. The program offers a diverse curriculum that includes math, social studies, English, music, and art, supplemented by weekly field trips to local cultural sites and instruction on navigating local transportation. This program has been successful in facilitating academic, cultural, and social integration for newcomers and SLIFE (Baca, 2024).
- **Cleveland Metropolitan School District’s** Multilingual Multicultural Education Department established the *EL High School Acceleration Program*, which provides non-traditional opportunities for students to receive credit for courses taken abroad and offers accelerated pathways to earn high school credits for graduation and workforce preparedness (González & Berrios, 2024).
- **Metro Nashville Public Schools** added EL teachers and boosted resources for translation and interpretation. Professional development pathways for EL educators were created in addition to providing wraparound supports from counseling, social workers, and other services. Frequent check-ins with new students are conducted, supported by counselors and interpreters, to ensure their needs are consistently met (Hegwood et al., 2022).
- **New York City Public Schools’** Division of Multilingual Learners created “SIFeshare,” an interactive professional learning network to help educators build strong learning communities for serving SLIFE and newly arrived ELs (Trobe, 2023).

Importantly, some districts have been instrumental in efforts to shift deficit-oriented mindsets to asset-based ones that recognize newcomers for the resilience, rich experiences, and life knowledge they bring. These districts create environments that foster belonging and confidence while enriching the entire school community with cross-cultural understanding and global awareness.

31 Office of English Language Acquisition. (2023, June). *Newcomer toolkit*. U.S. Department of Education. <https://ncela.ed.gov/educator-support/toolkits/newcomer-toolkit>

Designing Opportunities for Asset-based Learning

New York City Public Schools implements a *Stand-Alone English as a New Language (ENL)* model for newcomers/SLIFE to access grade-level texts and receive dedicated English language development in all classrooms. The district also utilizes thematic units of study to provide opportunities for newcomers to actively engage in their learning. Instructional goals are designed to build background knowledge tied to academic standards, target vocabulary development, and increase access to grade-level texts. Teachers also encourage the use of home language as a resource and aim to build student agency. Additionally, peer interactions are leveraged to support learning, especially in areas such as learning figurative language, deepening understanding of key ideas and concepts, and comparing language and language patterns.

Opportunities for Newcomers to Participate in Grade-level Content: *Asset-based Learning Structures*

- Team across content areas to include high-leverage, consistent routines for sense-making
- Design scaffolds that promote access and engagement through 6 evidence-based instructional goals for ELLs
- Include grade-level knowledge building with connected cycles of reading, talking, and writing activities
- Build participation alongside their peers, strategically leveraging home language

<u>*Identify a set of consistent routines across a thematic unit</u> to promote language, literacy, and content growth:	<u>*Plan lessons across the week with a focus on six high-leverage instructional goals for ELLs:</u>	<u>*Design scaffolded activities within read, talk, write cycles</u> that support success with the instructional goals:
1. Three Reads Protocol 2. Text Translate Protocol	1. Build Background Knowledge 2. Target Vocabulary Development 3. Increase Access to Grade-Level Texts 4. Use Home Language (HL) as a Resource 5. Build Student Agency 6. Use Peer Interactions to Support Learning	• Working with cognates (vocabulary development) • Making sense of key themes and concepts (build background, vocabulary development) • Learning figurative language (peer interactions, HL) • Deepening understanding of key ideas concepts (use of home language, peer interactions) • Comparing language and language patterns (peer interactions, HL) • Modeling language for authentic purposes (increase access to grade-level texts, HL)

Source: Adapted from Baez, J. (2023, May 4). *Thematic units of study for ELLs: Designing opportunities for newcomer ELLs to participate in their learning* [PowerPoint slides].

In the absence of clearly defined protocols or terminology, school districts have implemented efforts to identify newcomer students and ascertain their educational and non-academic needs to make decisions about instructional programming and wraparound supports. These efforts include developing or adopting questionnaires and protocols administered by multilingual staff (or using interpretation services) to identify the diverse range of skills, abilities, and educational experiences that students bring with them to the United States and administering literacy and numeracy assessments when available in the students' home languages.

These efforts are examples of districts tackling the unique challenge of evaluating and interpreting the educational experience and knowledge students bring from abroad, within the framework of the U.S. K-12 system, to provide newly arrived students with meaningful access to public education. However, depending on how these challenges are addressed, the term “newcomers” may provide very little actionable or meaningful insights into their needs. For instance, some newcomer students arrive with English language proficiency skills, while others may know little to no English. Some newcomer students may have strong academic skills in core academic subjects, such as math, science, and language arts, while others may have experienced significant interruptions to academic instruction and foundational skills development.³² Yet, in many current identification schemes, these differences are not recognized or leveraged as assets.

Welcoming Afghan Refugees to Tulsa Public Schools

Fall 2021

In the fall of 2021, Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) began welcoming the arrival of Afghan refugee students and families.³³

Enrollment and Housing Support

Initially, many of these refugees were housed in temporary accommodations (e.g., hotels). To ensure enrollment was as seamless as possible, TPS implemented on-site enrollment services at the temporary accommodations, enabling families to register their children without needing to travel far from their temporary homes.

Parent Orientation and Support

To alleviate confusion and build trust with newly arrived families, offering an essential foundation for their children’s educational journey, TPS prioritized providing in-depth orientation for parents at the temporary housing accommodations. The two-hour orientation sessions introduced parents to the U.S. education system and specific details about TPS programs. TPS provided translated materials and offered interpreters, ensuring that communication was clear and accessible in Pashto and Dari. As a result, parents felt more empowered to navigate the educational system, with the opportunity to ask questions and revisit information whenever necessary.

Instructional Support for Refugee Students

Upon enrollment, refugee students were placed in the Tulsa Virtual Academy (TVA),³⁴ which provided a flexible, online learning environment. The TVA offered both synchronous and asynchronous classes, allowing students the flexibility to learn at their own pace while receiving support from live instructors.

(continued on next page)

³² Ibid.

³³ Since 2021, Tulsa Public Schools has welcomed refugees from other countries around the world and expanded the services and supports for these new arrivals.

³⁴ School districts were still responding to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the fall of 2021.

To address the specific needs of English learners, TPS deployed its language and cultural services team to provide direct, in-person support at the temporary housing units twice a week. This direct instruction focused on foundational English language skills as well as helping students navigate the online learning platforms.

To further support academic integration, TPS instructors visited the temporary housing units once a week, where they worked directly with students to establish relationships and ensure they were successfully engaging with the online platform. This weekly check-in helped ensure that students not only received the academic instruction they needed but also had the emotional support necessary for their transition.

Support and Coordination

Recognizing the complexity of refugee resettlement, TPS formed a refugee task force, bringing together cross-functional teams from across the district. This task force met weekly to coordinate services and address the unique needs of refugee students and their families. The task force's focus was on ensuring that services such as special education, mental health support, transportation, and child nutrition were accessible to all families, particularly those in short-term housing.

TPS also partnered with local organizations to offer job opportunities for refugees and to hire a refugee navigator who could serve as a liaison between the families and the school district. This partnership aimed to address not only educational needs but also employment opportunities for refugee adults. Additionally, TPS collaborated with three local organizations to fund adult English as a second language (ESL) classes for refugee parents.

Community and Transportation Support

Transportation was another critical aspect of refugee integration into the school system. To help students access resources around the city, TPS partnered with Tulsa Transit to offer free bus rides to secondary school students. Students were provided with student IDs that allowed them to use public transportation at no cost, thus facilitating their mobility and access to important services.

Once students transitioned to neighborhood schools, TPS made sure to support them with orientation and integration. School staff offered tours and extended time for families to familiarize themselves with the school environment. Recognizing that the American school system might differ significantly from what refugee students were accustomed to, staff worked to ensure that students felt comfortable and confident in their new surroundings.

For secondary students, TPS coordinated with school teams to identify student leaders who could help orient new refugee students, fostering a sense of community and inclusion. Additionally, refugee students were grouped into cohorts, ensuring they shared the same bell schedule and courses, which helped create a support network among peers.

Source: Tulsa Public Schools. (2021, December 15). *Tulsa PS refugee support update* [Letter].

PART II

District Considerations for Identifying and Serving Newcomers



Identifying and Supporting
Newcomer Students

PART II

District Considerations for Identifying and Serving Newcomers

Part II outlines three steps to assist districts in carefully considering *why* and *how* they would classify students as newcomers and/or Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). The decision to identify and service newcomers and SLIFE separately from the general EL population can lead to added complexity to which the district must respond, including the heterogeneity of newcomers and the commitment of time, staff, and resources required to address the identified needs.

- Step 1:** Districts articulate the purpose for which they wish to screen for and classify newcomer students.
- Step 2:** Districts determine programmatic responses to the academic and non-academic needs of newcomers and their families and plan for allocating district resources to support programs and services.
- Step 3:** Districts articulate a sound pedagogical rationale for making newcomer placements, given their needs, within the context of the district's programs and resources.

STEP 1: Articulate the Purpose for Identifying Newcomers

Purpose for Identifying Newcomers

First, the district needs to determine the purpose for identifying students as newcomers and/or SLIFE, including how such identification benefits the students. Figure 1 shows six of the main reasons why Council-member districts identify newcomers and SLIFE. These reasons include providing programming and resources for identified students, as well as administrative data collection and reporting requirements.

Figure 1. Reasons for Identifying Newcomers and/or SLIFE



In the absence of a federal statutory definition for *newcomers* or *SLIFE*, districts and states have the discretion to define and use these terms. Using this discretion wisely means knowing WHICH terms to use, the PURPOSE for using specific terms, and ensuring that the definitions capture the unique district contexts, such as funding schema and program design.

In the absence of a federal statutory definition for *newcomers* or *SLIFE*, districts and states have the discretion to define and use these terms. Using this discretion wisely means knowing WHICH terms to use, the PURPOSE for using specific terms, and ensuring the definitions capture the unique district contexts, such as funding schema and program design. Districts may want to consider the following questions to help determine what drives the intent to classify students as newcomers and/or SLIFE—and how the classification benefits students in ways existing programs might not support:

Programs and Services

- Does the district design and implement, or plan to design and implement, targeted instructional and/or support programs for newcomers?
- Is the district providing *specific* services or programs for identified newcomers/SLIFE and their families that differ from those offered to other students new to the district?
- Can the district address the needs and concerns of newcomers and/or SLIFE in ways that are manageable and align with the needs of other student groups?

Accountability, Funding, and Reporting

- How does the district collect data related to newcomers for accountability and funding eligibility? Do these data collection practices need improvement?
- Does the district seek funding from federal or state sources or philanthropic organizations?
- Is the district responding to state and/or federal agency reporting requirements?

Table 3 lists some of the most common purposes for identifying newly arrived students, the corresponding terms (included under the “newcomers” umbrella term), and definition sources.

Table 3. Common Purposes for Identifying Newly Arrived Students

Purpose	Terms and Considerations
Accountability for Student Progress	
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) ACCOUNTABILITY	Under ESSA Title I regulations for ELA assessments, ³⁵ Recently Arrived English Learners (RAELs) are defined as students who have been enrolled in a school in one of the 50 U.S. states or the District of Columbia for less than 12 months.
Funding	
Federal FUNDING for immigrant children and youth under ESSA Title III	Per Title III of ESSA, Immigrant Children and Youth (A) are aged 3 through 21; (B) were not born in any State; and (C) have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more States for more than 3 full academic years. ³⁶ Districts can receive Title III allocations based on the SEA grant distribution criteria.
State or local FUNDING	Districts may access state or local funds in accordance with definitions and eligibility requirements defined at those levels.
Programming and Support	
District-designed, targeted INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS	Districts need to identify educational needs specific to newcomers to inform program components that provide instructional support and access to educational opportunities.
District-designed, RESPONSIVE SUPPORTS (mental health, socioeconomic, legal, etc.)	Districts need to determine culturally responsive and appropriate services, staffing, location of services, and wraparound supports (e.g., transportation needs, mental health needs) that meet the unique needs of newcomers.
Data Collection	
District DATA COLLECTION for funding advocacy, enrollment projections, and evaluation	Districts need to enhance the student information system (SIS) to include fields related to newcomers to support seeking federal, state, and local funds; to operationalize accountability; and to evaluate programs.
DATA COLLECTION to inform programming, funding, and accountability in response to newly emerging needs	Districts newly experiencing significant enrollment of newcomers need to collect data on enrollment and student needs to inform programs and supports.

35 For *Exception for Recently Arrived English Learners* (ESEA section 1111(b)(3)(A)), see ESSA Flexibilities. U.S. Department of Education. (2018, October). ESSA flexibilities. U.S. Department of Education. https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/2020/10/essa_flexibilities_oct_2018.pdf

36 Defined in Section 3201(5) of the ESEA. U.S. Department of Education. (2019, January 2). *Non-regulatory guidance: English learners and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essatitleiiiguidenglishlearners10219.pdf>

Creating Schoolwide Systems to Support Newly Arrived English Learners

New York City Public Schools produced *A Leader's Resource for Welcoming Newly Arrived ELLs*,³⁷ to help school leaders and intake teams strengthen systems that support newly arrived English learners. The tool focuses on three planning areas: human resources, physical resources, and school culture/professional learning. It encourages schools to align bilingual and English as a New Language (ENL) teaching assignments with student needs, hire bilingually-certified staff, and create advisory programs tailored to this population.

The tool also outlines services and supports that are distinct for newly arrived students and their families. These include creating specialized intake teams made up of staff from different roles—such as administrators, ENL teachers, parent coordinators, and social workers—developing multilingual welcome materials, designing orientation sessions specifically for newly arrived families, and establishing targeted communication systems, like messaging apps and Saturday adult classes. Furthermore, the tool encourages schools to partner with multilingual community-based organizations (CBOs) to expand available supports, further differentiating these services from what might typically be offered to other new students.

Schools are encouraged to embed newcomer needs into grade-level and departmental team meetings, campus-wide cultural events, and professional learning for all staff. Data-sharing protocols, collaborative team reviews, and feedback mechanisms (such as surveys and advisory groups) are built into the process to ensure newcomer supports are monitored alongside broader schoolwide efforts. This approach allows schools to address newcomer needs in ways that are intentionally designed for this population, while still aligning with the school's overall systems for student support.

Reasons NOT to Identify Students as Newcomers or SLIFE

Caution must be taken to ensure that the identification of SLIFE facilitates support that is truly in the best interest of students, rather than simply making their coursework easier or creating unnecessary isolation from their peers. The goal should always be to provide meaningful opportunities for academic and social integration, fostering their growth within an academically rigorous but supportive environment.

With long-term academic success and socialization as critical outcomes, certain practices should be avoided to ensure classification does not inadvertently hinder students' progress or limit opportunities:

1. **Do not give less rigorous content to “make things easier.”** The temptation may arise to reduce the academic rigor for newcomers or SLIFE in an attempt to make their transition easier. However, this approach can be detrimental in the long term. It can prevent them from developing the necessary skills they need to succeed academically and may convey a deficit-oriented message that they are not capable of engaging in the same level of coursework as their peers.
2. **Do not segregate newcomers.** It is crucial that newcomers or SLIFE are not isolated from their peers. While targeted support may be necessary, it is equally important for newcomers and

³⁷ New York City Public Schools Division of Inclusive & Accessible Learning. (2024, September). *The first steps: A leader's resource for welcoming newly arrived ELLs in NYC Public Schools*. New York City Public Schools.

SLIFE to have opportunities for peer interaction and participation in the broader classroom community. Isolation limits social and academic integration, which can result in feelings of alienation or a lack of motivation. Inclusion, collaboration, and exposure to the same standards as their peers are essential for their academic and personal growth.

3. **Do not let concerns about graduation requirements limit support or opportunities.** Graduation requirements are important, but focusing too much on meeting these benchmarks can lead to rushed decisions that prioritize fulfilling requirements over providing meaningful support for newcomers and SLIFE, aligned with their interests and goals. In other cases, they may lead to a sense that investing in students with barriers to graduation is not worthwhile or result in accountability-based penalties.

Districts that choose to identify newcomers/SLIFE to provide targeted support can address underlying concerns constructively, reducing the potential negative effects of labeling. Table 4 offers examples of common observations and associated productive and unproductive reasons for identifying newcomers/SLIFE. Step 2 will expand on the needs of newcomers/SLIFE and potential responses that are more constructive.

Table 4. Unproductive and Constructive Reasons for Classification

Concern	Unproductive Reason for Classification 	Constructive Reason for Classification 
Struggling with academic content	Provide newcomers/SLIFE with less challenging courses and assignments to “make things easier.”	Train teachers of newcomers/SLIFE to offer additional time or targeted support to help them engage with the same level of content as their peers.
Adjusting to a new environment	Place newcomers/SLIFE in a separate class or school to “protect them.”	Provide an intentionally designed environment with support, promoting social and academic integration.
Meeting graduation requirements	Lower academic standards, or assign students to a lower track.	Develop partnerships to provide academic acceleration to newcomers/SLIFE in addition to supporting them to develop foundational skills.

Academic Acceleration to Meet Graduation Requirements

Cleveland Metropolitan School District's *English Learner High School Acceleration Program* is designed to support newcomers aged 16-22 who have prior schooling experience but lack official transcripts. Many newcomer students, particularly refugees, enter the school system with significant academic knowledge but are placed in lower grades due to missing records. This program seeks to address that challenge by offering a structured yet flexible pathway to graduation, allowing students to earn credit for prior learning while receiving intensive language support.

Students in this program undergo pre- and post-assessments to determine their competency in various subjects. Non-state-tested courses, such as Health, World Languages, Fine Arts, and General Electives, can be completed through project-based learning or credit recovery if needed. For state-tested courses, including English, Algebra, American History, and American Government, students must complete in-person coursework following the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) guidelines. The program is designed to enable students to graduate within two years, utilizing an intensive semester-based schedule that ensures they stay on track with their educational goals.

Sample Schedules



Year 1 Sample Schedule			Year 1 Sample Schedule		
Semester 1			Semester 2		
Period	Courses	Staffing Requirements	Period	Courses	Staffing Requirements
1	ELA/ELD 1	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	1	ELA/ELD 2	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
2	ELA/ELD 1	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	2	ELA/ELD 2	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
3	ELA/ELD 1	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	3	ELA/ELD 2	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
4	Lunch		4	Lunch	
5	American History	SS/TESOL Endorsed Teacher	5	American Government	SS/TESOL Endorsed Teacher
6	Algebra 1	Math/TESOL endorsed Teacher	6	Algebra 1	Math/TESOL endorsed Teacher
7	Credit Recovery	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	7	Credit Recovery	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
8	Project-Based Learning	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	8	Project-Based Learning	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
<i>PBL is assisted by ELA/TESOL Endorsed Teacher, but evaluated by content teacher.</i>			<i>PBL is assisted by ELA/TESOL Endorsed Teacher, but evaluated by content teacher.</i>		
Year 2 Sample Schedule			Year 2 Sample Schedule		
Semester 1			Semester 2		
Period	Courses	Staffing Requirements	Period	Courses	Staffing Requirements
1	ELA/ELD 3	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	1	ELA/ELD 3	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
2	ELA/ELD 3	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	2	ELA/ELD 3	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
3	ELA/ELD 3	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	3	ELA/ELD 3	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
4	Lunch		4	Lunch	
5	Credit Recovery	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	5	Credit Recovery	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
6	Credit Recovery	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	6	Credit Recovery	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
7	Project-Based Learning	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	7	Project-Based Learning	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
8	Project-Based Learning	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher	8	Project-Based Learning	ELA/TESOL endorsed Teacher
<i>PBL is assisted by ELA/TESOL Endorsed Teacher, but evaluated by content teacher.</i>			<i>PBL is assisted by ELA/TESOL Endorsed Teacher, but evaluated by content teacher.</i>		

Source: González, J. O., & Berrios, Y. (2024). *English learner high school acceleration program* [PowerPoint slides].

STEP 2: Determine Responses to the Identified Needs

A district's decision to identify students as newcomers should be paired with an articulation of how the needs of identified students would be met, depending on the district context and the specific needs. Common needs of newcomer students and families identified by Council-member districts³⁸ involve:

- A. School-to-Home Connections, Acculturation, and Agency
- B. Routines in U.S. Schools
- C. Educational Needs Regarding Academic Content Knowledge

Upon identifying the needs that the district will specifically address, the responses need to be determined. These responses can be grouped by their target—students or the adults supporting them.

- **Student-facing responses.** District supports and resources to address newcomer needs, such as instructional practices and resources for acculturation to the U.S. school environment, culturally responsive supports, and wraparound social-emotional services.
- **Adult-facing responses.** District supports and resources to equip educators with the knowledge, pedagogy, and materials to address the educational needs of newcomers and/or SLIFE, such as relevant professional development, adequate staffing, and tools/resources to engage with newcomers and their families meaningfully. Adult-facing responses may also include support for families.

Table 5 outlines the most common needs identified by educators in Council-member districts for newcomers, along with possible responses through district programs and services. It is important to note two key aspects of the table's contents:

- First, while English acquisition is a common need among newcomers, this is not universally true. For example, newcomers from English-speaking countries like Liberia or Jamaica may not be classified as English learners but still require support in adjusting to U.S. school norms.
- Second, SLIFE are a subset of newcomer students. Many of the needs of newcomers and SLIFE overlap, meaning that district responses can address the needs of both groups. However, under each of the three main areas, specific needs unique to SLIFE are also highlighted.

³⁸ The identified needs and possible district responses were derived from an iterative process with the working group as well as extensive engagement with EL program directors and staff from across the Council's membership.

Table 5. Needs of Newcomers and Considerations for Responses

Need	Response Considerations
School-to-Home Connections, Acculturation, and Agency	
Considerations for All Newcomers	
Acclimation to U.S. school community norms for parental engagement	Adult-facing (Parents) Guide parents through school processes (e.g., requesting an excused absence) and norms for interacting with members of the school community, including for advocacy. Student-facing Support students to learn that certain processes in school require parents/guardians, and for students without guardians, teach them the appropriate processes and ways to find support.
Acclimation to self-advocacy in the U.S. school environment	Adult-facing (School Personnel) Provide professional learning for district staff to engage constructively with student self-advocacy and not presume unreasonable defiance to authority. Adult (Parents) and Student-facing Teach students and families how to seek help and how to advocate for their needs and rights.
Coping with acculturative stressors and other mental health needs	Adult-facing (School Personnel) Provide professional learning to district staff who engage with newcomers and their families to understand the acculturative stressors that are typical and expected. This learning helps counselors, family liaisons, and interpreters to engage in culturally respectful and asset-oriented ways to support newcomers and their families, including: - Working with families to welcome mental health services, especially if those services are stigmatized in their home countries, and - Referring families to, and helping them access, mental health support and/or counseling services that are culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible.
Special Considerations for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education	
Processing of past instability and traumatic experiences. Prolonged interruptions in formal schooling may be associated with difficult life experiences due to economic, social, or political instability. Interruptions may also occur during a long and difficult journey from their home country to the U.S. Understanding distinctions between youth and adult societal roles. SLIFE may have adult-like experiences and responsibilities, and may lack support from adults (e.g., unaccompanied minors).	
Routines in U.S. Schools	
Considerations for All Newcomers	
Acclimation of students and families to U.S. school routines	Adult (Parents) and Student-facing Help students and families understand school routines like taking the school bus, eating in the cafeteria, taking tests, using the library, and attending parent-teacher conferences.
Acclimation of students to U.S. classroom routines	Student-facing Create specific student-friendly protocols for unfamiliar routines such as: submitting schoolwork, understanding when and how to work collaboratively vs. independently, hand-raising, using technology, requesting a hall pass to go to the bathroom, sitting in class, etc.

Table 5. Needs of Newcomers and Considerations for Responses, continued

Need	Response Considerations
Special Considerations for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education	
• Learning unfamiliar school routines. If students have no or very limited formal education, learning school routines may require additional support and can take more time compared to newcomers who have prior, more consistent school experience in their home country. • Understanding age-related laws. SLIFE may have led adult-like lives in their home country and be unfamiliar with U.S. laws related to drinking, smoking, and compulsory education.	
Educational Needs Regarding Academic Content Knowledge	
Considerations for All Newcomers	
Acquisition of content-area knowledge emphasized in U.S. schools	Adult-facing (School Personnel) • Provide professional development (PD), support, and resources to help teachers understand and address the educational needs of newcomers. • Provide PD and resources to show teachers how to help students transform rich, informal knowledge into school learning.
Understanding of the pedagogical practices and the expression of knowledge expected in U.S. schools, especially when these are different from prior schooling (critical thinking versus dictation and memorization)	Adult-facing (School Personnel) • Train counselors, family liaisons, and teachers how to support newcomer students (and families) in understanding new expectations. • Provide PD and reminders for teachers to provide ample opportunities for newcomers to learn new expectations, have patience as students acclimate, and celebrate incremental progress.
Development of foundational English literacy skills for students who do not speak English, especially in the secondary grades	Adult-facing (School Personnel) • Provide PD to help teachers understand students' literacy needs and develop effective instructional responses for teaching comprehension, not just decoding.³⁹ • Train teachers and administrators to know that learning grade-level content should not be delayed because students do not yet know how to read in English or their home language.
Special Considerations for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education	
• Developing reading stamina. Students who have not been consistently in school may lack reading stamina. • Developing foundational literacy skills. Due to limited exposure to formal education, SLIFE may not know how to read or write in their home language. • Transferring informal knowledge. SLIFE possess life skills and knowledge acquired through working and adapting to changing environments. Instruction and support are needed to transfer this informal knowledge into the formal school expectations and formats. • Needing extra time, space, and support. In some cases, Tier I instruction that includes EL services might be insufficient to successfully support a student's transition, thus requiring a separate class period or program for SLIFE.	

39 Council of the Great City Schools. (2023). *A framework for foundational literacy skills instruction for English learners: Instructional practice and materials considerations*. Council of the Great City Schools. https://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/35/CGCS_Foundational%20Literacy%20Skills_Pub_v14.pdf

Meeting the Needs of Newcomers through Summer Programming

The Albuquerque Public Schools' *Newcomer Summer Program* serves recently arrived English learners in grades 6-12 who have been in U.S. schools for less than three years, many with limited or interrupted formal education. Participants come from diverse backgrounds, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Syria, Mexico, Rwanda, and more.

School-to-Home Connections, Acculturation, and Agency

The program strengthens connections between schools, students, and families through multilingual and culturally responsive support. A diverse team of educators, specialists, and case managers who collectively speak 16 languages helps students and families navigate their transition to U.S. schools. Newcomer specialists provide classroom support in Kinyarwanda/Kirundi, Swahili, French, Arabic, Dari/Farsi, Pashto, and Spanish.

To support students' acculturation and sense of agency, the program incorporates learning circles facilitated in their native languages. These spaces allow for semi-structured discussions on topics such as current events, cultural sharing, mental health, and gender roles, highlighting and celebrating students' cultural assets, including poetry, music, dance, and language.

Routines in U.S. Schools

The program introduces students to U.S. school culture and expectations through interactive and engaging experiences. Key program components include:

- Student clubs, including Soccer, Afghan Student Well-being, Gardening, Art, and Student Empowerment Club, create opportunities for social connections, well-being, and leadership development.
- Field trips to Explora Children's Science Museum, ABQ Zoo & Botanical Gardens, Rio Grande River & Bosque, and local colleges allow students to explore and engage with their new community beyond the classroom.

Educational Needs Regarding Academic Content Knowledge

Recognizing that students are learning English while simultaneously engaging with academic subjects, the program provides:

- Credit (0.5 elective credit for high school students upon successful completion) through a content-based elective course that integrates English, math, science, social studies, art, and music.
- Multilingual newcomer specialists who offer classroom support in students' native languages, assisting with both language acquisition and academic comprehension.
- *Orientation & Planning Week* for staff, featuring professional development on newcomers and encouraging a collaborative and strengths-based approach among educators.

Source: Baca, A. (2024, May). *Albuquerque Public Schools newcomer summer program* [PowerPoint slides].

Districtwide Investment

Once a district has determined it wishes to identify students as newcomers and/or SLIFE for specific, concrete reasons (Step 1), and determined how it will respond to the needs of the identified students (Step 2), the district needs to identify the corresponding resources and plan for implementing the responses. Resource and implementation considerations include leadership and educator buy-in and internal structures/processes that will be used for collecting and using data for placement and programmatic decisions that maximize student success, including high school graduation. In other words, to create and sustain effective instructional practices and supports for newcomers and SLIFE, districts need:

1. The support and express commitment from district leadership to collect and report newcomer information to better meet the needs of students.
2. Structures, programs, and staffing that respond programmatically to the identified needs of newcomers.
3. A sense of shared responsibility among relevant departments for creating structures and protocols for the timely and accurate collection of information, the protection of student privacy, and the effective use of data reporting for decision-making.

Advocacy for Resources to Serve Newcomers

Minneapolis Public Schools has made several key investments to support newcomer students:

- A Newcomer Team was established to provide support for newcomer students across various departments.
- 25 full-time equivalent (FTE) ESL teachers were added across the district by weighting FTE allocation for students with WIDA proficiency levels 1 and 2.
- The district funded the *Office of Latine Achievement* to provide additional support for Spanish-speaking students and families.
- The district engaged in advocacy at the state legislature to increase EL funding by 25 percent annually over the next four years and to add Hmong and Somali as World Language licenses.

Source: Warfa, M., Demorest, M., & Tayyeb, M. (2023, May). *Minneapolis Public Schools* [PowerPoint slides].

(1) The support and express commitment from district leadership to collect and report newcomer information to better meet their needs.

Existing district structures, protocols, and data collection practices often do not adequately support the screening and data collection needs related to newcomer students and their families. To ensure the accurate and effective collection of information, district leadership must commit to:

- Expanding data fields in the student information system to collect essential background information on newcomers.
- Providing instruments (questionnaires and assessments) in multiple languages and access to qualified interpreters to obtain reliable information from students and families.
- Strengthening protocols to safeguard the collection and reporting of background information.
- Establishing a designated team responsible for interpreting collected data and making recommendations for instructional placement and support services.

Importance of Reviewing Data Regularly

Data collection on newcomers and SLIFE must be ongoing to ensure programs remain responsive to evolving needs. Regular review of enrollment trends and student data is essential for accurate decision-making and effective resource allocation.

Several districts have implemented data dashboards to track newcomer trends and inform programming, such as:

- **Guilford County**—Tracks newcomer arrivals, academic needs, and support services.
- **Los Angeles**—Uses comprehensive data systems for placement, resources, and student services.
- **Oakland**—Monitors language proficiency, enrollment, and academic progress.

(2) Structures, programs, and staffing that respond programmatically to the identified needs of newcomers.

Existing district programs may require adaptations to serve newcomers effectively. While some newcomer needs align with those of other students, many require a more tailored approach. Considerations for how districts can respond programmatically include:

Identification and Numbers of Newcomers

- Determining that the district has enough students identified as newcomers who need a specific type of support to create specialized programs.
- Determining a district process to identify SLIFE and provide appropriate academic support.
- Establishing systems to collect and report data to evaluate the effectiveness of programs/ services to meet the needs of newcomers.

Program Availability

- Developing or adapting district programs to address the academic needs of newcomers specifically, ensuring that assigned teachers are knowledgeable and effective in working with this student population.
- Expanding district supports and services to address the social-emotional and non-academic needs of newcomers, including access to food and housing assistance, immigration legal services, and mental health supports tailored to their unique experiences.
- Establishing referral protocols for wraparound services that account for language and cultural barriers to ensure respectful and effective access to essential resources.

Once districts develop structures around newcomer identification and programs to support them, these programs must be revisited on an ongoing basis to make sure the programs and structures evolve in response to new immigration trends of the district and reflect best practices that emerge as more research and coherent guidance become available.

Given ongoing staffing shortages, districts must also address key questions related to recruiting and retaining staff equipped to meet the needs of newcomers:

- **Experience and familiarity:** Has the district identified teachers with expertise in supporting newcomers, ensuring an inclusive and effective learning environment?
- **Linguistic and cultural connections:** Are there educators who speak the students' home languages or share their cultural backgrounds to facilitate meaningful support?
- **Relevant professional learning:** Does the district provide timely, relevant professional development to build educators' capacity to effectively serve newcomer students?
- **Tailored supports for SLIFE:** Are there educators who understand the specific needs and assets that SLIFE bring to the classroom and who are equipped to support them?

Equipping Teachers of Newcomers and SLIFE

Sacramento City Unified School District provides a robust set of resources to help educators support newcomers and SLIFE. These resources include research-based best practices and a list of scaffolds designed to support language development during instruction. Teachers can access videos and examples linked to these best practices and use checklists to track student language development.

To foster community building in the classroom, Sacramento City Unified offers resources on creating a welcoming environment and addressing cultural differences, along with guidance for staff with limited understanding of the diverse cultures they serve. There are also research-based articles to support classroom management, EL instruction, and lesson planning. Social-emotional learning is also emphasized, with strategies to build empathy and help students understand the challenges their peers may be facing. Furthermore, the district offers tools that explain the brain science behind trauma, providing educators with strategies to support affected students effectively.

Resources for Teachers

Instructional Supports	Welcoming/Community Building	Cultural Resources	Social Emotional Learning
• Research-based best practices • List of scaffolds to provide substantial support during instruction • Videos and examples linked • Checklists to keep track of language development	• Building classroom community • Building a community of caring learners • Article: <i>Engaging ELLS in the Classroom</i> (accessing content & establishing connections) • Creating a welcoming environment	• Addressing and understanding cultural differences • Supporting staff with limited understanding of the diverse cultures welcomed and served • Research-based articles to support classroom management, ELL instruction, lesson planning	• Implementation of lessons and activities that build empathy and understanding about what students are facing • Implementation of lessons and activities that explain the brain science behind trauma and introduce strategies and tools to support students affected by it

Source: Adapted from Simms, O. L., & Brown, S. (2022, May 13). *Welcoming newcomer and refugee students* [PowerPoint slides].

(3) A sense of shared responsibility among relevant departments for creating structures and protocols for the timely and accurate collection of information, the protection of student privacy, and the effective use of data reporting for decision-making.

To improve data collection and reporting on newcomers, a collaborative approach is essential. Relevant departments must share responsibility for:

- Developing clear protocols for timely and accurate data collection while ensuring student privacy.
- Establishing processes for securely reporting and utilizing collected data to inform decision-making.
- Ensuring all relevant stakeholders—educators, administrators, and support staff—are trained in best practices for data collection, privacy protections, and the effective use of data to support newcomer students.

By fostering interdepartmental collaboration, districts can create sustainable structures that ensure newcomers receive the appropriate support and services they need.

Protecting Student Privacy

Student data are legally protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Districts cannot share these data externally—or even with some internal staff—unless specific conditions are met, or unless the parent provides written consent.⁴⁰

FERPA's Core Protections

FERPA guarantees parents (and eligible students) certain rights, including:

- The right to inspect and review education records.
- The right to request corrections to inaccurate or misleading information.
- The right to control (in most cases) who can access personally identifiable information (PII) from student records.

Parents have the right to know:

- What is being collected?
- Why it is being collected?
- How it will be used and protected?

Safeguarding Data

Limit Access to Data. Only staff who have a clear, educational need to see specific student data should have access. This typically includes enrollment specialists, teachers working directly with the student, and data and evaluation staff supporting EL programs. Data should not be accessible without a clear educational reason and appropriate safeguards.

(continued on next page)

40 U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). FERPA. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/ferpa>

Secure Data Storage and Transmission. All newcomer and SLIFE data should be stored in district-approved, secure systems, such as the student information system (SIS). Avoid using unsecured spreadsheets, personal email accounts, or cloud services to store or share these data. When sharing data internally or externally (with required permissions), use secure transfer methods, such as encrypted email or a secure file-sharing platform.

Train Staff Regularly. Ensure all staff involved in enrollment processes understand their FERPA responsibilities. These include:

- Recognizing which data are protected.
- Knowing how to handle requests for data (from families, staff, researchers, and outside agencies).
- Understanding when data can and cannot be disclosed—and who to contact if unsure.

Review Data-Sharing Agreements Carefully. If working with external partners—such as researchers studying programs or vendors providing screening tools—make sure all contracts include FERPA-compliant privacy terms. These agreements should clearly spell out:

- What data can be shared?
- How will data be protected?
- When must data be destroyed?
- What prohibitions exist on redisclosure?

STEP 3: Articulate the Rationale for Newcomer and SLIFE Placements

Districts should establish clear guidelines for placing students in programs and connecting them with services that effectively support their academic, linguistic, and social-emotional development. Thoughtful placement decisions benefit from a comprehensive understanding of students' backgrounds, prior education, and English proficiency, while also ensuring access to appropriate supports.

Program-related Questions for Placement

As educators are equipped with important and relevant information to better understand the assets and needs of newcomers, the following set of questions must be weighed to develop clearly delineated programs and services and to make proper placements for newcomers:

- a) Will the student be able to thrive with Tier I support in the program placement? If not, is there a need for a transitional program? If so, will it be fully staffed and supported to produce the intended educational outcomes? Will the placement unnecessarily segregate newcomers?
- b) How will the district's English learner program address the needs of newcomers if those needs are determined to be different from other English learners? What additional supports will be available for SLIFE?
- c) What are the time parameters of programs specifically targeted for newcomers and/or SLIFE?

PART III

Data Collection Instrument and Protocols

Identifying and Supporting
Newcomer Students

PART III

Data Collection Instrument and Protocols

Getting Started: Educational Background Questionnaire (EBQ)

This guide outlines an **Educational Background Questionnaire (EBQ)** that serves as a starting point districts can adapt to gather the information about students for targeting supports and services. In addition to a questionnaire highlighting important information to request from students and families during intake, the guide includes considerations for administering and interpreting the questionnaire.

Educational background questionnaires are typically time-consuming to administer, involve extensive training for district staff, and may require substantial language interpretation resources. Families do not want to sit through a long interview process, especially if they have experienced similar information-gathering as part of their refugee or asylum process. Thus, districts need to have clear processes and protocols to determine which educational background information needs to be obtained from students and how it will be used. This will allow the district to better allocate its staff and language resources.

District Protocols

Once the district has determined a purpose for classifying students as newcomers and/or SLIFE, it will be important to establish a protocol to gather student background information so appropriate instruction and support can be delivered. Staff should receive training and guidance to carry out the district protocol to identify students who are newcomers and/or SLIFE. Because not all English learners are newcomers, and not all newcomers are SLIFE, adherence to a carefully designed flowchart will help district staff determine which students and/or families will answer an EBQ.

The Varied Experiences and Backgrounds of Newcomers and SLIFE

The intersectionality of English proficiency, time in U.S. schools, prior formal education, and content knowledge complicates decision-making to discern which students will answer an EBQ. Assumptions cannot be accurately made about the English proficiency or educational background of students and their families. Newcomers and/or SLIFE may have content knowledge and skills that are dramatically different from their U.S.-born or -raised peers; however, not all SLIFE have had the same educational trajectories. Many newcomers will have experienced at least some formal education and may present transcripts. Some newcomers have a degree of English proficiency because they received instruction in English or studied English as a foreign language. All newcomer students arrive with a wealth of lived experience, world knowledge, and cultural knowledge that can be leveraged in the classroom if the opportunity is provided.



Designing the protocol. The protocol design should reflect the purposes for which the district is interested in identifying newcomer students and include clear guidelines for which students should be administered an EBQ to maximize accurate identification, avoiding unnecessary widespread screening. If the district has programs and supports for newcomers and/or SLIFE in place, the EBQ can be used to help inform which programs or supports a particular student should receive. Furthermore, if the district is in the early stages of data collection and just beginning to enroll newcomers, the protocol and questionnaire should include questions that support the initial development of data systems and the creation of programs and services tailored to newcomers.



Designing the questionnaire. The sample EBQ provided in Part V is designed to obtain relevant educational background information to make determinations about instructional programs and support needs. Districts may opt to adopt the EBQ in its entirety. Districts with existing questionnaires as part of their registration process might consider enhancing those questionnaires with additional content from this EBQ.



Interpretation. A critical part of the district protocol is guidance for the interpretation of results and the intended use of such results for student placement and identification of needed support. Districts need trained staff to interpret the results and work with relevant staff to make recommendations for placement and services.



Review of EBQ administration protocols. Districts new to administering an EBQ should review how the process works after several months or a year and decide if any adjustments are needed (e.g., additional staff training, revising protocols, refining questions, etc.).

Tip for Getting Started: Collect and Use Data to Understand Needs

Spending a year on focused data collection can provide a clearer understanding of the newcomer population and their specific needs. This information is essential for making informed decisions on resource allocation, ensuring the greatest impact. A structured approach to data collection helps to:

- assess the academic, linguistic, and social-emotional needs of newcomers;
- identify gaps in existing programs and services;
- determine staffing needs, including bilingual educators and cultural liaisons; and
- develop targeted supports that address both academic and non-academic challenges.

A strong data foundation ensures that programs are responsive, equitable, and sustainable as newcomer populations evolve.

Candidates for Educational Background Questionnaire

Districts may have a flowchart or matrix that enables them to determine which students (and families) are given an EBQ. (See Table 6.) The flowchart should be designed to be used in schools and the central office. Four key factors are important for districts to consider when designing a decision protocol:



Target student age. Starting at what age or grade level will the district administer the EBQ? Children younger than 7 or entering before grade 2 will have limited schooling experience. Obtaining child development information for these young newcomers may be best through a district's existing process to learn about the early learning experience of all students, with appropriate interpretation to minimize language barriers for the families. The sample EBQ provided in Part V was developed for older elementary, middle, and high school students. This questionnaire is typically not used for students arriving in grades K-2, or under 6-7 years of age. In cases where students are unsure of their exact age or lack documentation, districts may need to rely on an approximate age based on available information.



New to U.S. schools. If the student went to school abroad and has been in U.S. schools for less than three years, the student could be identified as a newcomer, based on the *Newcomer Toolkit* (2023) non-statutory definition. When registration documentation or personal interactions reveal that a student is new to U.S. schools and there are no accompanying transcripts from schools abroad, the questionnaire would be a helpful tool to obtain information about educational experience.



Exposure to English. When a student is entirely new to English or shows very little proficiency in English—and the student does not have transcripts that indicate prior enrollment in formal education—the questionnaire, administered with interpretation services if needed, may help obtain key information for placement.



Previous schooling experience. During initial exchanges, district staff may learn that the student's last completed grade is below the expected level for their age. Unusual schooling circumstances—such as limited schedules or inconsistent access to teachers—can also be identified. The questionnaire will help gather important information about the student's educational background.

Flowcharts are approximations of a reality that can include unforeseen circumstances, making determinations difficult. Ultimately, if the information on the listed factors does not clearly determine to whom to administer the EBQ, two key questions to ask students are: (1) "What was the last grade you attended?" and (2) "Did you go to school consistently before coming to the U.S.?" To support these decisions, Table 6 summarizes considerations that can help determine whether the EBQ is likely to be beneficial.

The sample EBQ provided in Part V was developed for older elementary, middle, and high school students. This questionnaire is typically not used for students arriving in grades K-2, or under 6-7 years of age.

Table 6. Educational Background Questionnaire Usefulness Considerations

Considerations	EBQ Potentially Beneficial	EBQ Unlikely to Benefit
Target Student Age 	Student is 7 years old or older, entering grades 3 and up (older elementary, middle school, high school). Older students are typically expected to have sufficient schooling experience and are better suited for the EBQ.	Student is younger than 7 years old, entering grades K-2. Students under age 7 or in early elementary grades typically have limited formal schooling experience, making the EBQ less applicable.
New to U.S. Schools 	Student is new to U.S. schools (less than 3 years in U.S.) and lacks transcripts from schools abroad. Newcomers may lack educational documentation from their home countries, and the EBQ can help assess their academic background and needs.	Student has been in U.S. schools for more than 3 years or has transcripts from previous schooling. If students have been in the U.S. for over 3 years, they likely have integrated into the U.S. educational system and may not require the EBQ.
Exposure to English 	Student is new to English or shows very little proficiency and lacks prior formal schooling transcripts. A lack of English proficiency, especially with no educational background records, makes the EBQ helpful to assess academic and language needs.	Student has some English proficiency or has transcripts indicating prior formal education. Students with some English proficiency or educational transcripts can likely be placed appropriately without the EBQ.
Previous Schooling Experience 	Previous schooling experience is irregular, inconsistent, or lacking (e.g., limited schedule, school without teachers, or lack of consistent access to education). Inconsistent or irregular schooling indicates that students might be missing foundational knowledge, making the EBQ an essential tool for understanding their academic history and needs.	Student has consistent formal education and transcripts available for evaluation. If students have a consistent formal educational background, the EBQ may not provide additional valuable information, as records can be used directly for placement.

Given the heterogeneity of newcomers, there is no single answer or flowchart that will select with perfect certainty which students should be administered the EBQ. District staff will need to engage in an ongoing process of data analysis to ensure the EBQ results in improved screening protocols to better serve newcomers and/or SLIFE, and to make protocol or questionnaire modifications, as necessary, considering the particular population of newly arrived students. Table 7 shows a sample decision-making chart for identifying which students will benefit from taking an EBQ.

Table 7. Sample Decision Chart

Considerations	Yes	No
Target Student Age —Is the student 7 years old or older (entering grade 3 or higher)?	☐	☐ EBQ is unlikely to benefit. (Student is too young with limited formal schooling.)
New to U.S. Schools —Has the student been in U.S. schools for less than 3 years and lacks transcripts from abroad?	☐	☐ EBQ is unlikely to benefit. (Student has either substantial U.S. schooling history or transcripts from previous schooling.)
Exposure to English Proficiency Level —Does the student show very little English proficiency and lack formal schooling transcripts?	☐	☐ EBQ is unlikely to benefit. (Some English proficiency and/or transcripts provide enough data for placement.)
Previous Schooling Experience —Is the student's previous schooling irregular, inconsistent, or severely disrupted?	☐	☐ EBQ is unlikely to benefit. (Consistent formal schooling with transcripts provides sufficient placement data.)
Determination	If mostly , EBQ is likely to be beneficial.	If mostly , EBQ is unlikely to be beneficial.

Supporting Newcomer Families

If a student does not receive an EBQ, but interactions reveal that the family is new to U.S. schools, the district may have another protocol to determine how to support and engage newly arrived families. Some key considerations for supporting newcomer families, even if an EBQ is not administered, are provided below and summarized in Table 8.

- **Identifying newcomer families of young children.** Young students, such as those in K–1, may not have had significant schooling experiences abroad and often show characteristics similar to U.S.-born students. However, their families may be new to the U.S. and unfamiliar with the school environment. Districts should identify these families and offer orientation and support to help them engage with the school district and support their children’s academic and social-emotional success.
- **Leveraging social networks.** Families newly arrived in the U.S. might have access to social networks that include fellow nationals who speak the same language and who have settled in the area years before. These social networks are invaluable to help newly arrived families know how to navigate the U.S. school system. Some districts may be in a position to apply for grant funding to hire a community liaison who can facilitate connections and help families find linguistically and culturally familiar resources. However, some families will arrive in areas absent fellow nationals who can assist them in understanding how to navigate U.S. schools to support their children. For these families, school-provided information and support will likely be the sole source of guidance.
- **Home language access.** When district staff speak the languages of newly arrived students, they may learn valuable information about educational experiences through day-to-day interactions and instruction. In the absence of this language connection, a meeting with an interpreter—even without using the standard EBQ—can help elicit important background information that might not be shared through other means. Additionally, this may provide students and families with a chance to ask questions or express needs they may not be able to communicate in other settings.
- **Asset-based placement and programming.** If the last attended grades are age-appropriate and students or their families confirm consistent attendance, placement in those grades is reasonable, pending transcript review or testing. In such cases, the students would not be identified as SLIFE, as they have maintained regular school attendance. Additionally, staff should recognize the possibility that some newcomer students have taken advanced courses in their home country and should be given information on pathways to access advanced coursework or gifted and talented programming.

Table 8. Considerations for Supporting Newcomer Families

Considerations	Responses
Family Identification —Ensures parents are equipped with the knowledge to engage actively in their child's education and navigate school procedures.	• Recognize the unique needs of young children (K-1) whose families may be new to the U.S. and unfamiliar with the school environment. • Conduct a family needs assessment to determine language barriers, prior school experiences, specific cultural considerations, and family aspirations for their children. • Implement parent orientation programs that explain school routines, expectations, and available resources in multiple languages.
Social Network Integration —Strengthens sense of belonging and provides emotional and practical support, easing the transition.	• Facilitate connections to immigrant communities, often by connecting newcomer families with established community members who speak the same language. • Establish a community liaison program where local residents or school staff serve as cultural ambassadors to support newcomers. • Offer social events or gatherings where families can meet and learn from each other, reducing isolation.
Language Support and Access —Promotes effective communication, which leads to a better understanding of the student's needs and school expectations.	• Ensure language access for all family interactions, from enrollment to parent-teacher conferences, by offering interpretation services in the family's native language. • Train bilingual staff in school policies and academic expectations, empowering them to help bridge communication gaps. • Use visual aids and translated materials to ensure written information is accessible, even when face-to-face language support is unavailable.
Asset-Based Student Programming —Ensures that students are not under- or over-placed, fostering their academic growth based on their actual abilities and needs.	• Assess the student's educational background by considering prior schooling experiences. Even if not formally documented, this insight helps guide appropriate grade and course placement. • Offer placement flexibility by considering the student's readiness for advanced coursework, as some may have experienced rigorous educational systems in their home country. • Provide pathways to advanced programs (like gifted and talented) based on demonstrated skills, not just grade level.

Supporting and Engaging Newcomer Families

- **Austin Independent School District:** Worked with community organizations to enhance communication and engagement with refugee and newcomer families. Program offerings for families included: Afghan Women's Sewing Group, GirlForward Mentorship Group, CSA Vegetable Program, 4ATX Foundation Verde Leaders Soccer Group, Refugee Parent Advisory Group, and Afghan Boys Cricket League (Fernandez & Johnson, 2023).
- **Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools:** *Charlotte Mecklenburg Afghan Allies Meaningful Partnerships for Success (CHAAMPS) Initiative* provided continuous case management through the Learning & Language Acquisition department, ensuring newly enrolled CHAAMPS students were connected from the International Center to schools, received mentoring, and had their basic needs met through community partnerships and donations (Trez et al., 2022).
- **St. Paul Public Schools:** Fostered collaboration between the Office of Multilingual Learning and Student Placement Center to identify SLIFE, determine EL eligibility, and create onboarding materials (e.g., translated videos on navigating the city bus system, multilingual key documents) (Schmidt de Carranza, 2023).

PART IV

Protocols for EBQ Administration



Identifying and Supporting
Newcomer Students

PART IV

Protocols for EBQ Administration

Districts vary in how newcomer students register for school—some do so at centralized welcome centers or the district's central office, while others register at school sites. The logistics for administering an educational background questionnaire (EBQ) will depend on whether this takes place at a central location or school sites. This section describes the most common resources required to support an effective administration of an EBQ and the overall protocol to obtain a more holistic assessment of newcomer strengths and needs.

District Resources for EBQ Administration

Depending on the district's registration practices and experience with welcoming newly arrived families and children to the U.S., a questionnaire may be administered as part of its existing registration process for newcomers. If so, districts may want to add only select questions from the sample EBQ in Part V. School districts with less experience welcoming newly arrived families may find it useful to use the EBQ in its entirety as part of efforts to develop more robust protocols for screening and placing newly arrived students for academic success.

A set of factors important to ensuring the successful administration of the EBQ is presented in the following paragraphs and summarized in Table 9.

Language Access. Removing language barriers is vital to obtaining accurate and comprehensive responses to the EBQ. Districts are required to provide language access to families by ensuring that multilingual staff or interpretation services are available on site to assist in the registration process, including administering related questionnaires like the EBQ. Prior to beginning the questionnaire, districts must determine the language in which students and parents feel most comfortable communicating, and secure interpretation services if necessary.

- Whether at a central welcome center or school sites, staff administering the EBQ should have proficiency in the family's home language or use an interpretation service to elicit full and accurate responses.
- Students may feel nervous answering without their parents, and parents will likely have more complete information about school attendance. If the student is of elementary school age, the questionnaire may be administered primarily to the parent.

Adequacy of Facilities. Privacy and a level of comfort will result in more accurate responses. Staff should be mindful of FERPA requirements by ensuring that personally identifiable information is protected during the administration of the questionnaire, and should also aim to provide a quiet, comfortable setting to support honest and thoughtful responses.

- Centralized registration or welcome center staff should administer the EBQ in smaller, private spaces rather than open areas.

- When the EBQ is administered at a school site, it should take place in smaller, more private spaces where an interpreter can work with staff, rather than an open office.
- The site should have sufficient resources, including phone lines for language interpretation and devices if EBQ answers are recorded electronically.
- Hours of operation and staff schedules should accommodate the schedules of newly arrived families, taking into consideration employment, transportation, and/or childcare constraints.

Monitoring EBQ Administration and Safeguarding Student Information. The district English learners office should conduct internal placement audits to ensure that the questionnaire information is used to provide students access to grade-level content and to provide relevant support services for newcomers. Additional considerations are as follows:

- **Qualifications for Administering EBQ.** The administration of the EBQ should be performed by appropriately trained staff who have proficiency in the newcomers' home languages or are trained and comfortable in utilizing interpretation services. Cross-cultural understanding and an asset-oriented view of immigrant communities are key. Designated staff who administer the questionnaire should embody this disposition and/or be trained in culturally relevant customer service.
- **Monitoring Quality of EBQ Administration and Responses.** Once implemented, the district (e.g., EL/ML office) should monitor the administration of the questionnaire to avoid overburdening families and to ensure schools are equipped to respond to the information in a supportive and constructive manner. Monitoring the administration of the EBQ should also consider the quality of the information obtained and the experiences of families and students to evaluate if alternate sites or district offices would be better positioned to support this unique group of students (e.g., a welcome center).
- **Sharing EBQ Results.** The district protocol and resources should address how the results of the EBQ will be shared with district and/or school staff. The district's protocol and its guidance will answer questions such as:
 - What is the process for sharing the questionnaire results with staff?
 - Which staff will see the results, and who will be expected to take action based on the results?
 - If the questionnaire responses are initially recorded in a language other than English, what is the process for translating and storing the answers so they are available to all staff who need to access them?
 - Who maintains the student EBQ file, and for how long, especially in the absence of a transcript? Who is responsible for purging files, and on what schedule?
 - Is there a summary with program placement recommendations provided? To whom?
 - How is the information used to provide instructional support?

Table 9. Considerations for Educational Background Questionnaire Administration

Factor	Considerations
Language Access and Staff Qualifications	
Multilingual Staff or Interpretation Services	Provide multilingual staff or interpreters when administering the EBQ to ensure clear communication and accurate responses.
Language Preference	Ask families which language they feel most comfortable using before administering the EBQ.
Cultural Competency	Staff should be trained in cultural awareness and possess an asset-based view of immigrant communities, understanding the unique needs of newcomer families.
Administering with Parents Present	A parent or guardian should be present during the EBQ administration, if possible, to clarify answers. For younger students (elementary age), prioritize administering the EBQ to the parent to ensure more accurate information about the student's educational history.
Facility Considerations	
Private, Quiet Space	Administer the EBQ in private spaces to maintain confidentiality and comply with FERPA, avoiding public or open areas like front offices.
Available Resources	Ensure access to resources such as phone lines for language interpretation and devices for digital formats if needed for EBQ collection.
Flexible Hours of Operation	Offer flexible hours for families, accommodating their schedules, considering factors like employment, transportation, and childcare constraints.
Monitoring and Oversight	
Monitor EBQ Administration	Regularly monitor how the EBQ is being administered to ensure accuracy, effectiveness, and that families are not overwhelmed by the process.
Evaluate Process for Improvement	Continuously evaluate whether different locations or times (e.g., a welcome center) could better support families in completing the EBQ.
Privacy and Data Protection	
Confidentiality and FERPA Compliance	Ensure all student data collected via the EBQ are protected under FERPA guidelines, with strict confidentiality maintained throughout the process.
Sharing Results and Following Up	
Sharing Results with Relevant Staff	Develop a process to share EBQ results with relevant staff (e.g., counselors, EL/ML departments) and with parents to guide appropriate placement and support.
Clear Follow-up Actions	Provide parents with a summary of EBQ results and any necessary follow-up, including program placements, additional services, or next steps for student support.
Data Management and Retention	Establish clear policies for the retention, review, and purging of EBQ files, ensuring that they are kept only as long as necessary and in compliance with district policies.

Preparing Staff for EBQ Administration

Staff must be knowledgeable about the EBQ structure and qualified to administer it in a culturally responsive and supportive way. Table 10 outlines key training considerations, emphasizing the qualifications, skills, and practices critical for staff members to successfully engage with newly arrived families and collect meaningful data.

Table 10. Training Topics and Considerations to Prepare Staff for EBQ Administration

Training Topic	Considerations for Districts in Training Staff to Administer the EBQ
EBQ Questions, Purpose, and Related Supports	Note: Before training staff, determine whether to use the sample EBQ included in this document or modify an existing district questionnaire. If using the sample EBQ, review the questions to determine whether any should be added, removed, or revised for relevance. - Familiarize staff with the EBQ questions and flow so they can ask the questions fluently. - Make sure staff understand the purpose of each question and how it connects to student support so they can ask appropriate follow-up questions.
Engaging with Newcomer Students and Families	Basic Competencies - Staff members should have proficiency in the home language of newcomers or be trained in utilizing interpretation services. - Staff members must possess a cross-cultural understanding and maintain an asset-oriented view of immigrant communities. - Staff members should be comfortable with culturally relevant customer service. Practical Skills During questionnaire administration, staff members should: - practice cultural competency and active listening; - give families time to process and respond; - encourage trust and transparency; - reassure families that their responses are confidential and vital for student support; and - foster an open, transparent environment.
Emphasizing EBQ Purpose to Families	- Staff members should ensure the EBQ's role in supporting newcomer students is clear to students and families. - Staff members should emphasize the importance of gathering accurate data for student support.

Table 10. Training Topics and Considerations to Prepare Staff for EBQ Administration, continued

Training Topic	Considerations for Districts in Training Staff to Administer the EBQ
EBQ Data Collection	Question Logic/Structure Staff members should be comfortable adapting questions in real time based on the conversation. Below are some helpful principles: - Decide in advance if some questions should be asked only in specific situations (e.g., gathering information about subjects taken only if transcripts are not available). - Indicate sections that may be left blank. - Advise staff that supplemental questions should be left blank if no information is provided. - Advise staff that “if-so” questions require answers only when relevant. Contextual Notes - Staff members should know how to record contextual notes to capture any relevant background information provided by the family. - Staff members must understand the EBQ’s goals and thoughtfully record contextual notes relevant to those goals to minimize burden.
Data Sensitivity and Confidentiality	Staff members should understand the importance of confidentiality and student privacy laws (e.g., FERPA) when gathering data and be able to communicate this effectively to families.

Developing a Newcomer/SLIFE Screening Protocol

St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) has designed a structured protocol to identify newcomer students, including English learners and SLIFE, ensuring that students receive appropriate services and support. The protocol is designed to maximize accurate identification while avoiding unnecessary screening for all students. It also helps to inform the specific services and supports each student may need, based on their unique circumstances.

Newcomer Identification Process

- Enrollment and Screening.** All new and returning students to SPPS are initially enrolled at the Student Placement Center (SPC), not at the school sites. Once enrolled, students are assessed by the SPC Assessment Team to identify those who speak a language other than English, using the Home Language Survey (HLS). The assessment team determines whether students are eligible for English language services based on their responses.
- Language Support.** Throughout the enrollment and assessment process, the SPC and Office of Multilingual Learning and Literacy (OMLL) provide language support using bilingual staff or the assistance of outside agencies. This ensures that families and students receive clear communication in their native language. Additionally, OMLL provides training for SPC staff to administer the *WIDA Screener* for students in grades 1-12, while the *WIDA Screener for Kindergarten* is administered by EL teachers at the school sites.

(continued on next page)

SLIFE Identification Process

To specifically identify SLIFE, the protocol includes a SLIFE Family Interview, in line with the Minnesota *Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act*. During this interview, a member of the SPC assessment team conducts an oral interview with the student's family to assess the eligibility based on the Minnesota Department of Education SLIFE criteria. According to the criteria, a student can be considered SLIFE if at least three of the following five conditions are met:

1. Comes from a home where a language other than English is typically spoken, or speaks a language other than English.
2. Enters a U.S. school after grade 6.
3. Has at least two years less schooling than their peers.
4. Functions two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics.
5. May be preliterate in their native language.

Post-Screening and Identification

After the identification process, families receive a pamphlet that outlines the EL services, including identification criteria, exit criteria, eligible services, and parental rights to determine services. This pamphlet helps ensure that families are fully informed about their child's placement and support options.

Data Collection and Flagging in the Learning Management System

The OMLL works with the SPC to gather and process data on students, and relevant information is entered into the Learning Management System (LMS). Based on these data, students are assigned the appropriate flags in the system to ensure they are connected with the right services. This process helps to build and maintain accurate data for new and returning newcomer students, especially important in the early stages of enrollment as the district is still developing its data collection practices.

Source: Schmidt de Carranza, S. (2023, May 3). *Operation de-silofication: Partnership between Office of Multilingual Learning & student placement center* [PowerPoint slides].

PART V

Educational Background Questionnaire

Identifying and Supporting
Newcomer Students

PART V

Educational Background Questionnaire

Overview of the Questionnaire

The Educational Background Questionnaire (EBQ) consists of six sections as follows:

- | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|---|
|  | 1. Introduction |  | 2. Language Background Information |
|  | 3. Experience with English |  | 4. Technology |
|  | 5. Educational History |  | 6. Out-of-School Activities & Wraparound Supports |

For each EBQ section, the rationale for the questions and suggestions for using the information are provided.

The questions for each section are grouped into the following two types:

-  **Priority questions.** These questions are the most likely to inform decision-making about what programming, supports, or additional resources will be needed as students begin their education in the district. These questions are recommended during an initial interview, whether in a welcome center, a district intake office, or a school.
-  **Supplemental questions.** Each section also has supplemental questions, which help provide additional context to inform student supports. Supplemental questions can be skipped if they are not needed or if the district has no way to address or meet the related needs, even if information is provided. Additionally, it may make sense to ask some of the supplemental questions at the school since they will be helpful for educators to build the home-to-school connection with students. Additional follow-up questions and clarification questions may be asked as necessary.

Administering the Questionnaire

The Educational Background Questionnaire is intended to be administered orally to a student, together with a parent or guardian, in a language that both the student and guardian understand well. Students may feel nervous answering without a trusted adult, and adults will likely have more complete information about school attendance. If the student is of elementary school age, the questionnaire may be administered primarily to a parent or guardian. Appendix 1 includes a sample script that can be used to introduce the purpose of the questionnaire to families. Providing the questionnaire as a worksheet for a student to complete independently is strongly discouraged, as it is likely to result in unclear, incomplete, or contradictory information—all of which compromise the utility of the EBQ.

The next section presents a complete list of questions designed to gather information about the educational background of newly enrolling students identified for further screening as part of the enrollment process. This is followed by a section-by-section overview explaining the purpose of each group of questions and how the responses may be used to support students and their families. A version of the questionnaire with space for written responses is provided in Appendix 2.

Administering the Educational Background Questionnaire to Students

Administration Guidelines

- **Oral Administration:** Conduct the questionnaire verbally to maximize clarity and accuracy through interaction.
- **Language:** Use a language that both the student and guardian understand well.

Parental Involvement

- For elementary school-aged students, the questionnaire may be administered primarily to the parent or guardian.
- For older students, the questions may be directed to the student, but the parent or guardian should be encouraged to add information or context as needed.
- Parents should be included in the conversation since they often have more complete information about school attendance.
- Some students may feel nervous answering alone or may provide inaccurate information if they do not understand a question.

Educational Background Questionnaire

1. Introduction

- Begin by describing the purpose of the Educational Background Questionnaire and establishing a rapport to make the student and family feel comfortable with the questions.
- Asking a couple of questions about interests or goals is a good way to ease into questioning. See *Sample Script* in Appendix 1.



2. Language Background Information

- 2.1. What language(s) do you consider your home/first language?
- 2.2. In what language were your school lessons taught (orally) prior to arriving in the U.S.?
- 2.3. What was the language of the textbooks in your school prior to arriving in the U.S.?

Supplemental Questions

- (2.4.) How comfortable do you feel speaking/understanding/reading/writing in each of the languages you listed above?
- (2.5.) What language do the people who live with you prefer to read?



3. Experience with English

- 3.1. Did you study English in your home country?
- 3.2. Do any of the people you live with now speak English? Are they parents/guardians? Siblings? Someone else?

Supplemental Questions

- (3.3.) What did your English lessons look like? (e.g., copying English words and phrases from the blackboard, role-playing in English, reading in English, watching videos in English, etc.)
- (3.4.) How comfortable do you feel reading/writing/listening/speaking in English?



4. Technology



4.1. Are you comfortable using computers, laptops, tablets, and/or smartphones?

Supplemental Questions

(4.2.) Do you currently have access to a computer, laptop, or tablet?

(4.3.) Did you have access to computers, laptops, or tablets in the last place you lived?

(4.4.) Did you use computers, laptops, or tablets in your previous school? How did you use them?

5. Educational History



5.1. What was the last grade you attended?

5.2. What was the last grade you completed?

5.3. What grade were you in when you were __ years old? (Ask this question for all school-aged years, age 5 through their current age.)

5.4. Have there been months or years that you have not gone to school?

5.5. Do you have access to transcripts from your former school(s) that you can share?

5.6. In what country did you complete most of your schooling?

Supplemental Questions

(5.7.) What subjects did you study?

(5.8.) What subject do you feel you do your best in?

(5.9.) What type(s) of school did you attend? (e.g., public, private, religious, international, etc.)

(5.10.) What setting did you attend school in? (e.g., large school, small school, one-room schoolhouse, school in refugee camp, homeschool, etc.)

(5.11) What did a typical school day look like?

(5.12.) How many hours a day did you attend school?

6. Out-of-School Activities & Wraparound Supports



Supplemental Questions

- (6.1.) Before you came to the U.S., did you have other activities that you had to do instead of going to school or studying, like working or taking care of siblings?
- (6.2.) Do you still have to do those things, or will you have new things you have to do now that you're in the U.S.?
- (6.3.) What kind of non-academic activities and services did your school provide? (e.g., tutoring, meals, etc.)
- (6.4.) Did you participate in sports, clubs, or volunteer? (These need not be formal clubs.)
- (6.5.) We have services available to all of our students. Would you like to participate in any of these programs?

Getting the Balance Right: Reflections from the Educational Background Questionnaire Pilot on Questions to Ask and Questionnaire Length

In order to have a successful EBQ experience, districts are encouraged to customize the questions, prioritizing those that help coordinate support for individual students and gather data needed to justify adding or expanding programs for newcomer students. **Table 11. Preparing to Implement a Newcomer Identification Process in Part VI on page 67** may be helpful for thinking about how to customize the questionnaire.

Context and Rationale

During the pilot of the sample EBQ, the working group and pilot participants (pilot coordinators and intake managers) met several times to discuss the questionnaire and how the implementation was working in different district contexts. The main takeaway was that the EBQ provided valuable information but took a long time to administer. The sample EBQ in this document was updated based on the feedback to balance usefulness and administration time, notably by categorizing questions as “priority” or “supplemental.” Nevertheless, it is critical for districts to decide on the most meaningful questions for their goals and available services.

Section 1: Introduction

Introduction

- Begin by describing the purpose of the Educational Background Questionnaire and establishing a rapport to make the student and family feel comfortable with the questions.
- Asking a couple of questions about students' interests or goals is a good way to ease into questioning.



Notes: A sample script that can be used to introduce the purpose of the questionnaire to families is provided in Appendix 1.

Purpose: Explain the questionnaire and registration process to newcomer students and their families to put them at ease. Establish a rapport for students and parents to feel more at ease and provide comprehensive and helpful responses.

Supporting Students and Families:



Placement: Learning about students' goals, interests, and aspirations can inform asset-based programming.

Section 2: Language Background Information

Language Background Information

- 2.1. What language(s) do you consider your home/first language?
- 2.2. In what language were your school lessons taught (orally) prior to arriving in the U.S.?
- 2.3. What was the language of the textbooks in your school prior to arriving in the U.S.?



Supplemental Questions

- (2.4.) How comfortable do you feel speaking/understanding/reading/writing in each of the languages you listed above?
- (2.5.) What language do the people who live with you prefer to read?

Notes: This section is not meant to substitute for the district's Home Language Survey. These questions are typically asked at the district level, as part of the registration process and the process for identifying students as English learners.

Purpose: The purpose of questions in this section is to elicit information about languages the student has used, in both home and school environments prior to coming to the U.S. These questions can help staff identify additional languages that support effective communication with students and their families, especially during the early days after arriving at school.

Interpretation: The answers to these questions should help paint a more comprehensive picture of the student's experiences with language and literacy. If home language assessment instruments are available, that data will give more information about home language and literacy abilities.

Supporting Students and Families:



Placement: Language background information may help districts decide if a student should be placed in a dual language immersion program if one is available.



Support: Schools may provide written materials to newly arrived students and their families if they learn what language the student (and family) prefers to read.

Section 3: Experience with English

3. Experience with English



- 3.1. Did you study English in your home country?
- 3.2. Do any of the people you live with now speak English? Are they parents/guardians? Siblings? Someone else?

Supplemental Questions

- (3.3.) What did your English lessons look like? (e.g., copying English words and phrases from the blackboard, role-playing in English, reading in English, watching videos in English, etc.)
- (3.4.) How comfortable do you feel reading/writing/listening/speaking in English?

Notes: These questions are not meant to substitute for the district's formal screening process for determining if students require an instructional program to develop English language proficiency.

Purpose: The questions in this section aim to provide staff with information about students' prior experience with English *that is complementary* to the results of standardized English language assessments.

Interpretation: Answers to these questions are particularly valuable when students have difficulty responding to computer-based assessments during the formal English proficiency screening or have minimal levels of English proficiency.

Supporting Students and Families:



Placement: Information gleaned from a comprehensive picture of the students' familiarity with and proficiency in English can help educators plan for placement and instruction, scaffolds, and books related to each of the four domains—speaking, listening, reading, and writing.



Support: Understanding the emphasis of English lessons in the home country may give insight into areas of strength and weakness. For example, some English language education may emphasize vocabulary and grammar exercises rather than using the English language in “real-life” situations. If significant differences between domains are found during the

English proficiency screening, the descriptions of what lessons were like may provide supporting information to help focus schoolwork on domains or targets with which students have had less practice.

Section 4: Technology

4. Technology

4.1. Are you comfortable using computers, laptops, tablets, and/or smartphones?



Supplemental Questions

(4.2.) Do you currently have access to a computer, laptop, or tablet?

(4.3.) Did you have access to computers, laptops, or tablets in the last place you lived?

(4.4.) Did you use computers, laptops, or tablets in your previous school? How did you use them?

Purpose: This section helps educators understand the level of familiarity and comfort that students (and their families) have with computers and other devices.

Interpretation: Students who are familiar with digital devices will be better able to participate in computer-based practices in the school. Responses to these questions can be useful for classroom teachers to know how to support students new to using classroom technology.

Supporting Students and Families:



Support: If technology use is an assumed part of participating in school, students who have not had prior exposure to technology will need explicit instruction in how to use school-issued devices or how to access and use a device if one is not provided by the school.

Families will likely need assistance in supporting their children in using and properly securing devices. Additionally, students who have used devices previously, but not for school purposes, may need guidance and support around expectations for the appropriate use of devices in school contexts. Families and older students will also need guidance with understanding school district policies for device updates, maintenance, and repairs.

Section 5: Educational History

5. Educational History



- 5.1. What was the last grade you attended?
- 5.2. What was the last grade you completed?
- 5.3. What grade were you in when you were __ years old? (Ask this question for all school-aged years, age 5 through their current age.)
- 5.4. Have there been months or years that you have not gone to school?
- 5.5. Do you have access to transcripts from your former school(s) that you can share?
- 5.6. In what country did you complete most of your schooling?

Supplemental Questions

- (5.7.) What subjects did you study?
- (5.8.) What subject do you feel you do your best in?
- (5.9.) What type(s) of school did you attend? (e.g., public, private, religious, international, etc.)
- (5.10.) What setting did you attend school in? (e.g., large school, small school, one-room schoolhouse, school in refugee camp, homeschool, etc.)
- (5.11) What did a typical school day look like?
- (5.12.) How many hours a day did you attend school?

Notes: Schooling outside of the U.S. can take many forms, but should not be presumed less comprehensive or rigorous. A typical school day may vary depending on where students attended, and some schools may have scheduled or unexpected school closures. Rather than assume that a different educational approach is less effective, staff should think about how previous educational experiences could be leveraged in U.S. classrooms, as well as how to support students in adjusting to new school norms and routines that are unfamiliar.

It is recommended to pay special attention to Question 5.3: “What grade were you in when you were __ years old? (Ask this question for all school-aged years, age 5 through their current age.)” This may be filled out as a chart as shown in the worksheet in Appendix 2. By asking what grade students were in at each age, interviewers can identify repeated grades, skipped grades, and gaps in education. The interviewer may begin by asking, “How old were you when you first started school?” Then, for each subsequent year up to the student’s current age, the interviewer may ask, “What grade were you in when you were __ years old?”

Purpose: These questions help staff better understand students' previous school experiences outside of the U.S. The questions help identify the content knowledge and experiential learning that students bring and identify schooling patterns that may indicate if the student experienced limited or interrupted formal education. If the student attended school consistently, the Supplemental Questions may be skipped.

If responses to the priority questions in this section indicate potential interrupted or inconsistent schooling, the supplemental questions about the typical school day and setting can garner useful contextual information about the student's school experience. This supplemental information can inform educators about the U.S. school routines to which newcomers or SLIFE may need assistance adapting.

Interpretation: Interpretation of the questionnaire responses should integrate all available information to create a comprehensive profile of the student and support well-informed recommendations. There is no minimum threshold of answers that indicates an inconsistency or limitation in education or an algorithm that generates an automatic placement recommendation. Careful and insightful recommendations must come from qualified, cross-culturally aware educators who are knowledgeable of the district's programs and services to creatively envision a placement that meets the unique needs of newcomers and/or SLIFE. If transcripts confirm a continuous schooling experience and give information about what courses were taken, the information from the supplemental questions might not be needed. In other cases, careful interpretation of the answers will inform the type of supports that can benefit newcomers and SLIFE.



Note that all students were affected by COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures. Pandemic-based disruptions should not be considered qualifiers for SLIFE status unless an individual student experienced dramatically different school interruptions as compared to peers.

Supporting Students and Families:



Placement: Students should be placed in grade levels with peers around the same age. Older teenagers should not be placed in middle school, for example. The subjects students have studied and shown interest in can be leveraged to help them feel successful in the classroom. If students have limited experience with extracurricular activities, staff can orient and encourage them to join activities or choose electives aligned with their interests.



Support: Consider the severity of interrupted schooling and determine if existing district programs and supports are sufficient or if additional services would be needed. For example, for students who have been out of school for an extended time, or whose typical school day was very short, how will the district support the transition to the length of a typical U.S. school day? Document the number of students showing similar needs to plan accordingly, including for the allocation of resources.

Section 6: Out-of-School Activities & Wraparound Supports

6. Out-of-School Activities & Wraparound Supports



Supplemental Questions

- (6.1.) Before you came to the U.S., did you have other activities that you had to do instead of going to school or studying, like working or taking care of siblings?
- (6.2.) Do you still have to do those things, or will you have new things you have to do now that you're in the U.S.?
- (6.3.) What kind of non-academic activities and services did your school provide? (e.g., tutoring, meals, etc.)
- (6.4.) Did you participate in sports, clubs, or volunteer? (These need not be formal clubs.)
- (6.5.) We have services available to all of our students. Would you like to participate in any of these programs?

Purpose: The questions in this section help staff understand students' lives outside the classroom. Understanding the responsibilities students may have in helping their families mitigate income, housing, and/or food insecurity is essential for providing timely and targeted support to the family, as well as academic support to help the student succeed in grade-level content.

Interpretation: Understanding how students spend their time out of school, including helping with family activities, can provide important context to guide conversations around time management and uncover important skills and knowledge. Answers to these questions can also serve to inform district staff of student non-academic needs that could be met through district wraparound services, including partnerships with community organizations and affinity groups.

Supporting Students and Families:



Placement: Answers to the questions in this section can help determine whether the student needs a class schedule that supports balancing work and school. The answers can also help determine whether the student would benefit from specific programs, schools, and activities in a general school setting or whether the optimal placement is a more protected, newcomer-focused program/site to assist in this early transition to U.S. schools.



Support: The information gleaned from answers to this section can help determine whether the student and/or family needs housing, food, childcare, work-related supports, or has health-related needs, including mental health. Districts should prepare a list of supports available to all students, or newcomers specifically. The interviewer should describe the supports being offered and ask families if they would like to access any of these supports.

Considerations for Customizing the Questionnaire

The final section of the questionnaire, *Out-of-School Activities & Wraparound Supports*, is a great place to begin the customization process. Many districts already have programs that support students who need dietary or religious accommodations, among other possibilities. The final section of the questionnaire could be a great place to add questions like, “Do you have any food allergies or dietary restrictions?” so that the needs can be met.

Always be sure that additional questions lead to information that will support either the specific student or services for newcomer students as a whole. Some topic areas can be sensitive, such as questions about religion. In these cases, it is helpful to explain the accommodation the school typically provides and inquire if the student would like to receive or make use of those accommodations, rather than ask a question such as “What is your religion?”

Part VI

Planning to Use an EBQ in a Newcomer Screening Process

Identifying and Supporting
Newcomer Students

PART VI

Planning to Use an EBQ in a Newcomer Screening Process

Developing and implementing a comprehensive screening process for newcomers and/or SLIFE requires thoughtful, purposeful planning and stable resourcing. The effort is only worthwhile if the process yields actionable information for placement and improves services for newcomer students. Identifying newcomers and SLIFE should not become merely a bureaucratic burden for staff or newcomer families.

The screening process can vary from district to district, contingent on factors such as staffing, resources, and policies, but there are some generally applicable considerations for districts thinking of instituting a newcomer screening process or modifying an existing process. These considerations are as follows:

- **Effective communication with the newcomer students and their families.** Once the EBQ is completed, newcomers and their families need to understand the next steps, including scheduling any follow-up questions, screening, or obtaining documentation such as transcripts.
- **Referral process.** If any part of the EBQ process raises questions about the need for mental health referrals or special needs evaluations, districts should have a process for timely and appropriate follow-up.
- **Student privacy and access to EBQ responses.** Newcomers and their families should be informed where their completed EBQ will be filed (e.g., in the student file) and how they will be used. Designate district and/or school staff who can access the EBQ information to inform placement, understand student progress, and provide services needed.
- **Language of EBQ responses.** School staff may complete the questionnaire as a worksheet on page 76 (Appendix 2) of this document. If a translation is required, it is recommended to have the questions translated in advance. If answers will be recorded in the student's primary language, a plan should be made for the appropriate translation of the answers and data entry and/or secure storage of the questionnaire.
- **Decision-making support for parents.** If the placement recommendation involves a choice among different types of schools or settings—such as a newcomer program, newcomer center, or community school—provide guidance and support to help newcomer parents or guardians make an informed decision.
- **Preparation of receiving schools.** Part of the placement decision for newcomer students is determining the best academic fit for the student's success, but an equally important factor is that the school environment is welcoming for newcomers. Receiving schools should be immediately informed of newcomer students placed in their school and provided an informational sheet to help schedule specials/electives and support services.

Table 11 outlines an example of an initial setup process that should be completed by districts before incorporating an EBQ into intake processes.

Table 11. Preparing to Implement a Newcomer Identification Process

Action	Consideration
Review Parts II–IV of this Guide	☐ What questions should be asked (including supplemental questions), and how will the information from each question be used? ☐ What initiates the process for EBQ administration? (See <i>Candidates for Educational Background Questionnaire</i> in Part III.)
Decide Where EBQ Will Be Administered, and Which Staff Will Administer It	☐ Where will the EBQ be administered? At a district office, welcome center, or school building? ☐ Who will administer the EBQ? ☐ Which authorized district/school staff will have access to the data?
Develop Procedures for Data Protection, Management, Use, and Sharing	☐ What is the process for sharing the results of the questionnaire with parents and staff? ☐ Which staff will see the results, and who will be expected to take action based on the results? ☐ If the questionnaire responses are initially recorded in a language other than English, what is the process for translating and storing the answers so they are available to all staff who need to access them? ☐ Who maintains the student EBQ file, and for how long, especially in the absence of a transcript? ☐ Who is responsible for purging files, and on what schedule? ☐ Is a summary with program placement recommendations provided? To whom? ☐ How is the information used to provide instructional support?
Plan Professional Learning	☐ How will key personnel be trained in administering the EBQ? ☐ How will key personnel be trained in using EBQ answers to support students? ☐ What is the plan to make sure any new staff members who will be involved with the EBQ process receive training?
Plan for Interpretation and Translation Services	☐ How will the EBQ be translated for students? In the moment by an interpreter? Will a worksheet be translated so that the question phrasing will be similar for all students from a given language group? ☐ In what language will the answers be recorded? Will answers need to be translated, and what is the process for translating answers if needed?

Table 12 outlines an example of a step-by-step process that begins after an EBQ is completed and concludes when a student is placed and provided with services.

Table 12. General Use of Educational Background Questionnaire in the Placement Process

Timeline	Processes
Immediately After EBQ is Administered	Inform Family of Next Steps - Ask follow-up questions and request additional documents (e.g., transcripts). - Clarify what happens next in the process. Student Privacy & Access to EBQ Information (FERPA) - Explain where the EBQ responses will be stored (e.g., student file). - Clarify how the information will be used (e.g., placement, support services). - Share authorized district/school contact for access or questions.
Internal Staff Analysis/Review	Review EBQ Responses for Placement & Referral Needs - Identify academic background, language needs, and past schooling. - Determine if mental health or special needs referrals are necessary. Determine Best Academic & Social Fit - Consider academic background, language proficiency, and social-emotional needs. - Ensure placement supports long-term student success.
Parent Follow-up	Support Parents in Placement Choices If multiple placement options exist (newcomer program, center, community school, etc.), guide parents/guardians to make an informed decision.
After Placement Decision	Preparing Receiving School - Notify the school immediately about the incoming student. - Provide a profile with academic background and information to help schedule electives and support services. - Ensure a welcoming environment for the newcomer.
After Services Begin	Monitoring and Family Engagement - Monitor progress and provide additional resources as needed. - Continue communicating with family regarding the student's adaptation and success.

Welcoming Newcomer Families and Students to School

Tulsa Public Schools provides a comprehensive welcome and planning process for newcomers. Family home visits are conducted by a caseworker, Immigrant Student Services (ISS), and a registered nurse (RN) to provide essential information about school expectations, transportation, and the first day of school. The district offers families a choice of school options, such as Tulsa Virtual Academy (TVA) or in-person schooling. Planning meetings are held with school leadership, English language development (ELD) partners, counselors, and teachers to review newcomer information, set expectations, and plan school visits, while connecting families with available academic and cultural resources. The welcome meeting includes a school tour, introductions to the school and Language and Cultural Services (LCS) team, and interpretation services to support families on the first day. Translated documents are provided to ensure a smooth transition.

Home Visits

- Family + Case Worker + ISS + RN
- School options—TVA and In-Person
- School expectations, transportation, first day of school, etc.
- Welcome meeting

Planning Meetings

- School leadership + ELD Partner + counselor + teacher(s)
- Review information, set expectations, co-plan school visit
- Make connections to resources available for academic and cultural supports

Welcome Meeting

- First day of school at their neighborhood school
- School tour
- School + LCS team + Family + Case Worker
- Interpretation services
- Translated documents

Source: McCoy, G., Mitchell, M., & Grisso, L. (2022, May 13). *Welcoming our refugee students* [PowerPoint slides].

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Identifying and Supporting
Newcomer Students

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Appendices



Identifying and Supporting
Newcomer Students

APPENDIX 1

Script for Introducing the Educational Background Questionnaire

The script below is a sample introduction for the EBQ interview with students. It should be adapted based on the student's age and comfort level. Successful interviewers will be familiar enough with the script to speak conversationally, rather than read from it. As interviewers gain experience, they will become adept at modifying the script in response to each student's needs.

Script

Welcome, and thank you for being patient in answering questions that will help us make sure you learn English and are successful in your classes. It's important that you and your family know that you have a right to free public education in the U.S. and that nothing that you say during this interview will take away your chance to be in the public schools. I'd like to ask you some questions to get a better understanding of your previous experiences with school so that we can help you adjust to your school life in the U.S.

For younger students, ask:

What do you want to be when you grow up?

What do you do for fun?

For older school students, ask:

What do you want to do after you finish school?

What are your hopes, dreams, and wishes for your life?

If the parents are answering the interview questions, ask:

What are your hopes and dreams for your child?

NOTE: Spend a minute talking to the student about their goals and interests and what they shared with you. Wrap up with an encouraging statement about helping them reach their goals. Then, proceed to ask the EBQ questions, including any supplemental questions or your own follow-up questions as appropriate.

APPENDIX 2

Educational Background Questionnaire Worksheet

Interview Site: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Interviewer Name: _____ Interpreter Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Present for Interview: ____ Yes ____ No

Student Name/ID: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Grade of Matriculation: _____



Priority questions



Supplemental questions

Section 1: Introduction



Purpose: Explain the questionnaire and registration process to newcomer students and their families to put them at ease. Establish a rapport for students and parents to feel more at ease and provide comprehensive and helpful responses. Asking about the student's interests and goals, as outlined in Appendix 1, is a good way to ease into the conversation.

Notes about interests and goals:

Section 2: Language Background Information



Purpose: The purpose of questions in this section is to elicit information about languages the student has used, in both home and school environments prior to coming to the U.S. These questions can help staff identify additional languages that are helpful in successfully communicating with the students and their families, especially in the early days of arriving at school.

2.1. What language(s) do you consider your home/first language?

2.2. In what language were your school lessons taught (orally) prior to arriving in the U.S.?

2.3. What was the language of the textbooks in your school prior to arriving in the U.S.?

(2.4., Supplemental) How comfortable do you feel speaking/understanding/reading/writing in each of the languages you listed above?

Language	Speaking	Understanding	Reading	Writing
Language: _____	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure
Language: _____	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure
Language: _____	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure
Language: _____	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure	☐ Very Comfortable ☐ Somewhat Comfortable ☐ Not Comfortable ☐ Unsure

(2.5., Supplemental) What language do the people who live with you prefer to read?

Section 3: Experience with English



Purpose: The questions in this section aim to provide staff with information about students' prior experience with English that is complementary to the results of standardized English language assessments.

3.1. Did you study English in your home country?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

3.2. Do any of the people you live with now speak English? Are they parents/guardians? Siblings? Someone else?

- ☐ Parents/guardians
- ☐ Siblings
- ☐ Others: _____

(3.3., Supplemental) What did your English lessons look like? (e.g., copying English words and phrases from the blackboard, role-playing in English, reading in English, watching videos in English, etc.)

- ☐ Copying English words and phrases from the blackboard
- ☐ Role-playing in English
- ☐ Reading in English
- ☐ Watching videos in English
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

(3.4., Supplemental) How comfortable do you feel reading/writing/listening/speaking in English?

Language	Very Comfortable	Somewhat Comfortable	Not Comfortable	Unsure
Reading English	☐	☐	☐	☐
Writing in English	☐	☐	☐	☐
Listening in English	☐	☐	☐	☐
Speaking in English	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 4: Technology



Purpose: This section helps educators understand the level of familiarity and comfort that students (and their families) have with computers and other devices.

4.1. Are you comfortable using computers, laptops, tablets, and/or smartphones?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(4.2., Supplemental) Do you currently have access to a computer, laptop, or tablet?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

(4.3., Supplemental) Did you have access to computers, laptops, or tablets in the last place you lived?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

(4.4., Supplemental) Did you use computers, laptops, or tablets in your previous school? How did you use them?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Section 5: Educational History



Purpose: These questions help staff better understand students' previous school experience outside of the U.S. The questions help identify the content knowledge and experiential learning that students bring and identify schooling patterns that may indicate if the student experienced limited or interrupted formal education. If the student attended school consistently, the Supplemental Questions may be skipped.

5.1. What was the last grade you attended? _____

5.2. What was the last grade you completed? _____

5.3. What grade were you in when you were ____ years old? (Ask this question for all school-aged years, age 5 through their current age.)

Age	Grade	Age	Grade	Age	Grade
5		10		15	
6		11		16	
7		12		17	
8		13		18	
9		14		19	

5.4. Have there been months or years that you have not gone to school?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

5.5. Do you have access to transcripts from your former school(s) that you can share?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

5.6. In what country did you complete most of your schooling?

(5.7., Supplemental) What subjects did you study?

(5.8., Supplemental) What subject do you feel you do your best in?

(5.9., Supplemental) What type(s) of school did you attend?

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Private
- ☐ Religious
- ☐ International
- ☐ _____

(5.10., Supplemental) What setting did you attend school in?

- ☐ Large school
- ☐ Small school
- ☐ One-room schoolhouse
- ☐ School in refugee camp
- ☐ Homeschool
- ☐ Other: _____

(5.11., Supplemental) What did a typical school day look like?

(5.12., Supplemental) How many hours a day did you attend school?

Section 6: Out-of-School Activities & Wraparound Supports



Purpose: The questions in this section help staff understand students' lives outside the classroom. Understanding the responsibilities students may have in helping their families mitigate income, housing, and/or food insecurity is essential for providing timely and targeted support to the family, as well as academic support to help the student succeed in grade-level content.

(6.1., Supplemental) Before you came to the U.S., did you have other activities that you had to do instead of going to school or studying, like working or taking care of siblings?

(6.2., Supplemental) Do you still have to do those things, or will you have new things you have to do now that you're in the U.S.?

(6.3., Supplemental) What kind of non-academic activities and services did your school provide? (e.g., tutoring, meals, etc.)

(6.4., Supplemental) Did you participate in sports, clubs, or volunteer? (These need not be formal clubs.)

(6.5., Supplemental) We have services available to all of our students. Would you like to participate in any of these programs?

Service Name: _____

☐ Yes

☐ No

Service Name: _____

☐ Yes

☐ No

Service Name: _____

☐ Yes

☐ No

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