

## Process and Practice Components of Newcomer Programs

Creating an inclusive school community requires designing and sustaining school structures and processes that help to ensure newcomers are both welcomed and provided information and resources they need to thrive in the school environment. This includes a broad spectrum of support, from initial entry through the learning of rigorous academic content, to transitioning to a mainstream program or to postsecondary options in education and careers. Many of the recommended components listed below are district based; however, schools may implement these practices or advocate for particular components (Castellón et al., 2015; Horwitz et al., 2009; Short & Boyson, 2012).

### Newcomer Program Component with Examples of Processes or Practices

#### **Develop a clear vision and goals for newcomer students.**

*Examples:*

- Set academic and social goals for the students and build a program to meet them.
- Define entry criteria and exit criteria for the students in the program.
- Hold newcomer students to the same high standards as other students.
- Communicate the vision and goals to school, district, and community stakeholders.
- Conduct initial intake interviews with students and families in their home language.

#### **Develop a set of common values about newcomer students and accept shared accountability for the education of newcomers.**

*Examples:*

- Put forth an ambitious mission focused on preparing all students for college and career success.
- Hold a mind-set of continuous improvement.
- Recognize that the entire school shares responsibility for students' success.
- Determine the needs of the students and their families, and design and adapt school structures that meet those needs, with continuous improvement based on evidence.
- Maintain a strong sense of pride in and respect for all cultures.

#### **Design specific courses for students with interrupted formal education (SIFE).**

*Example:*

- Develop a separate literacy course or set of courses for students with interrupted educational backgrounds if the program has both preliterate and literate newcomers.

#### **Design instruction for students' development of conceptual, analytic, and language practices simultaneously.**

*Examples:*

- Create or adopt a unified language development framework integrating content, analytic practices, and language learning.
- Consider developing bilingual, dual language, or two-way immersion programs to support newcomers' home languages and English.
- Review general education and EL programs to ensure that there is an explicit focus on building academic literacy and cultivating English language development.
- Promote cross-disciplinary and cross-grade literacy expectations and teacher collaboration.
- Be aware of the second language acquisition process and be able to detect when a delay may not be due to the language learning process, but the result of a disability.

**Promote the use and development of students' home languages at school and in the community.**

*Examples:*

- Promote development of students' native language skills and incorporate native language instruction into the curriculum where possible.
- Promote use and maintenance of home languages through community partnerships.

**Provide alternative school day and school year schedules and structures based on student and family needs.**

*Examples:*

- Provide extra learning time through after-school, summer school, Saturday school, and/or vacation institutes.
- Determine student and family needs and design schedules and structures to meet those needs.
- Optimize student engagement, learning, and effort through creative scheduling and rigorous coursework.

**Engage families and community stakeholders in school programs and other supports to ensure students' success.**

*Examples:*

- Engage families by teaching them about schooling in the United States and showing them how to be involved in their children's education.
- Create opportunities for family input and involvement in school planning and implementation of programs.
- Plan support groups and activities to address family reunification issues.
- Make connections in the community for social-emotional support, health and mental health services, and immigrant and refugee services.
- Make connections in the community for career exploration, work experience, and internships for high school newcomers.
- Pursue community support for initiatives designed to accelerate achievement among newcomers.

**Establish processes for student transition to a mainstream program or postsecondary options.**

*Examples:*

- Smooth the transition process for students exiting the newcomer program (e.g., classroom and school visits, field trips, student mentors, auditing a course, cross-program teacher meetings).
- Work on postsecondary options for high school newcomers (e.g., connect with community colleges and trade schools, explore scholarship options, provide career education).
- Create strategic community partnerships for students to expand extracurricular options and explore college and career opportunities.

**Recruit, place, and retain qualified teachers and provide ongoing professional learning.**

*Examples:*

- Continue to recruit and retain teachers who are specifically trained to teach newcomers and have English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual credentials or endorsements. Provide ongoing professional learning for them.
- Assess district standards for hiring, placing, and retaining teachers, paraprofessionals, and staff members who work directly with newcomers and ELs to ensure that these students have access to highly effective personnel.
- Share leadership among principals, assistant principals, teachers, and other staff, and expect them to work collectively to support the school's vision, values, and goals.
- Ensure that all school staff have appreciation of and sensitivity to cultural diversity.
- Provide professional learning for mainstream teachers who receive newcomers after they exit temporary newcomer programs.
- Ensure that all teachers of newcomers and ELs have access to high-quality professional learning that provides differentiated instructional strategies, promotes the effective use of student assessment data, and develops

skills for supporting second-language acquisition across the curriculum, as well as for resources for understanding the impact of early life trauma on the developing child.

**Develop protocols to ensure newcomers have access to all course offerings and educational services.**

*Examples:*

- Create processes and structures to ensure that newcomers have access to the entire spectrum of district course offerings, including gifted and talented programs, special education, advanced placement courses, and other programs or courses offered to mainstream students.
- Work with the department in charge of special education to design an eligibility process for newcomers suspected of needing special education services because of a disability, so that they can be evaluated and, if found eligible, provided with an individualized education plan (IEP) in a timely manner (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, & U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, 2015, January, Section F, pp. 24–27).

**Collect and analyze student and program data to drive continuous improvement.**

*Examples:*

- Collect student data and conduct regular program evaluations.
- Develop a system for tracking multiple measures of newcomers' educational progress.
- Assess student capacities thoughtfully and in detail from entry through graduation and beyond, and update instruction, course offerings and structures based on these data.
- Work closely with students and their families, both formally and informally, to gather relevant information about the knowledge, background, and needs of students and their families.
- Implement extensive formative assessment practices in classrooms to inform instruction.
- Ensure that, if there are concerns of a disability, the student's status as an EL doesn't delay the eligibility process.

**Allocate appropriate resources.**

*Examples:*

- Ensure that resources generated by and allocated for newcomers are properly and effectively expended to provide quality instruction and services.
- Encourage school leadership to seek resources for newcomer programs and services from the district and community partners.