

Canada is increasingly becoming home to more newcomer families each year. For newcomer youth, integrating into a new school system can be challenging and isolating. Teachers can be a positive support for these students but may experience challenges meeting their complex and diverse needs.

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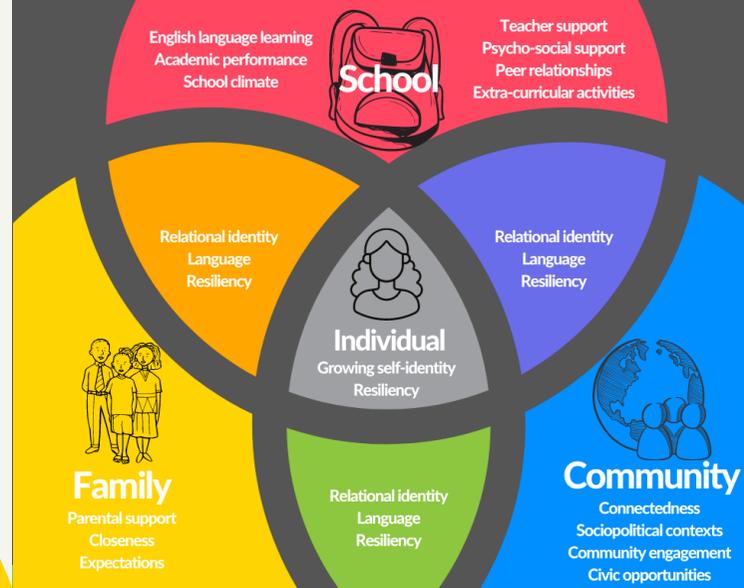
# Supporting Newcomer Students at School

Resources for Teachers

## Our Research

Newcomer youth are between the ages of 12 to 24, who have immigrated to Canada as first generation immigrants or refugees. We talked to 8 high school newcomer students and 10 university newcomer students over two years about their experiences integrating into the Canadian school system. They shared their stories using cultural probes, such as maps, journals, and photographs, as well as speaking to us in interviews and focus groups. This process is called Arts Based Ethnography. We also used a social justice framework which addressed issues of inequity, power and oppression to challenge the systems that limit newcomers.

Students shared that they were more engaged and connected with their school and community when they received support from their teachers, and this led to increased academic success and social-emotional well-being. We've taken the experiences they shared with us and created this resource to support teachers in their ongoing work with newcomer students.



This graphic represents the ways in which newcomer youth experience school integration.

## Creating Supportive Learning Environments

### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Newcomer students told us that building strong relationships with trusted teachers early in the process of school integration provided important support, academically and socially. They found that teachers who had empathy for their situation allowed them to feel comfortable reaching out for assistance.

### NAVIGATING PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS

Bridging the gap between school culture and parental expectations is a challenge faced by newcomer students. Teachers who are empathetic to the values held by newcomer parents and approach them in supportive, non-threatening ways help students navigate these conflicting values.

## Supporting Newcomer Students

### INCORPORATING DIVERSITY PROGRAMMING

Ethnic identity promotion in schools can foster a sense of acceptance. This includes offering diversity clubs, ethnic studies courses, peer mentorship programs and opportunities for cultural expression through academic projects and assignments.

### ENCOURAGING SOCIAL SUPPORTS

Supporting newcomer students in building multicultural, diverse peer groups helps to "bridge the gap". Helping these students get involved in school activities that are aligned with cultural values supports them in developing peer groups and fosters a sense of acceptance.

### REDUCING THE ACADEMIC GAP

Newcomer youth need academic support. This includes options for testing modifications and extended time, English language programming, homework support and programs that provide accessible information about continued education.

**"Educational systems have a cultural and social responsibility to create welcoming and engaging spaces for newcomer youth in order to maximize their academic success and civic potential."**

**DR. ANUSHA KASSAN**  
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