



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. School counsellors can be a positive support for these students but may experience challenges meeting their complex and diverse needs.

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This project was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Insight Development Grant and the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education, Jacqueline Farquhar Endowment for Children's Mental Health.

To cite:

Kalchos, L.F. & Kassan, A. (2021). *Supporting newcomer students at school: Resources for counsellors* [Brochure]. <https://anushakassan.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ABEE-Counsellor-Brochure.pdf>



THE UNIVERSITY
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Supporting Newcomer Students at School

Tips for Counsellors

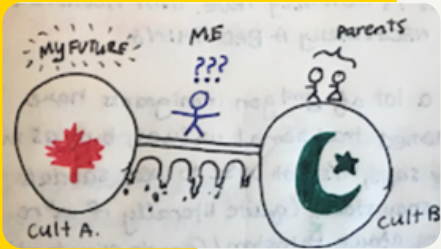
Our Research

In our research, we talked to newcomer youth (immigrants and refugees between the ages of 14 to 24 who migrated to Canada within the past ten years) about their experiences of school integration. Defined broadly, school integration represents the adjustment of newcomer youth across all aspects of student life – both inside and outside the school context.

Eight high school and ten university newcomer students shared their experiences of immigrating to Canada and integrating into a new school system. We used an Arts-Based engagement ethnography, which included the use of cultural probes (i.e., maps, journals, photographs), individual interviews, and focus groups.

Students shared that they were more engaged and connected with their school and community when they received direct support from school staff, and this impacted their academic success and social-emotional well-being in a positive manner. We have taken the experiences they shared with us and created this resource to support administrators in their ongoing work with newcomer students.

This is an example of a drawing produced by one of our participants, Malia. It is titled "The Cultural Barriers" and it depicts bridging the different parts of her identities.



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

Creating Supportive Counselling Relationships

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Newcomer students told us that building strong relationships with trusted counsellors early in the process of school integration provided important support, academically and socially. They found that counsellors who went beyond empathy and focused on building multicultural relationships were more effective in supporting their integration.

NAVIGATING PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS

Bridging the gap between school culture and parental expectations is a challenge faced by newcomer students. Counsellors who are empathetic to the values held by newcomer parents can build connections between home and school. These relationships support newcomer youth in navigating the process of school integration.

Supporting Newcomer Students

PRACTICING MULTICULTURAL COUNSELLING

Multicultural counselling and cultural competency are counselling practices that can be implemented to benefit newcomer students. Training for counsellors can provide knowledge, skills and attitudes for working with students from diverse backgrounds with specific needs. There is an increasing need for newcomer students to receive culturally responsive services that directly address their specific needs.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Newcomer students view education in Canada as a pathway to increased opportunity. Career planning strategies and programs that provide information about continued education specifically designed for newcomer students are beneficial in supporting their plans and reducing the academic gap.

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.

"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
University of British Columbia