

TWIN FALLS SCHOOL DISTRICT #411  
NEWCOMER CENTER



# HANDBOOK

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## **Newcomer Center Goals & Objectives**

- Address developmental issues within the context of the adjustment process for refugee and immigrant students
- Empower refugee and immigrant students for educational opportunities and increase their interaction with their mainstream peers
- Address social, emotional, and mental health needs of refugee and immigrant students that concurrently occur with the adjustment process
- Educate refugee parents about the Twin Falls school system and facilitate better understanding between refugee and immigrant parents and youth
- Educate school administrators, English Language Learner (ELL) teachers, and other school personnel about issues and resources for refugee and immigrant families
- Collaborate with schools and other community agencies in order to address the unique needs of refugees and immigrants

# WHAT IS THE TFSD NEWCOMER CENTER?

## **Twin Falls School District Newcomer Center**

The Twin Falls School District Newcomer Center (NC) serves as both an intake and welcome center to assist refugee students and families through their transition into American culture, the Twin Falls School District and the community. Intake facilitates a centralized registration process reducing frustration and confusion for students who face numerous challenges adapting academically to American culture and schools.

The goal is to effectively accommodate this population of non-English speaking refugee children or children new to the United States who have had little or no formal school experience or who have had their schooling interrupted by the events of their refugee experience or other trauma. Most of them have lost the extended family and community that they traditionally depended on for advice and support; many have experienced violence during their flight and stay in refugee camps. These families are currently adjusting to immersion in a new culture and to a daily life that is vastly different from their experiences in their countries of origin or countries of transition. Some of these refugee children are from **ethnic groups** that may not have a written language. School systems may be non-existent or nearly inaccessible. U.S. public schools face the challenge of teaching these refugee children in the classroom. Educators also must be aware of the need for a different approach, depending on a child's background and experiences (e.g., the effects of trauma, warning signs of emotional distress, post traumatic stress disorder, cultural norms regarding education, family structure, etc.)

Teachers in NC classrooms provide intensive English development and literacy instruction for a transitional time period while students adjust to American school and cultural norms. They also prepare students to transition to mainstream classrooms with the ability to participate socially and behaviorally, and communicate effectively.

## Student Progression through the Newcomer Center Program

### Notification of Arrival

- Family and student profiles are sent to the College of Southern Idaho Refugee Resettlement Program approximately two weeks prior to arrival in the Twin Falls area.
- As soon as family and student profiles are received, the NC Family Liaison is notified and a registration and assessment appointment is set.
- These appointments are usually scheduled for two to three weeks after families arrive in the Twin Falls area.

### Registration and Assessment

- Families meet with the respective NC teacher (depending on student grade and age), the Family Liaison, and an interpreter.
- Students are assessed and placed based on the results of the ACCESS 2.0 Online Screener or W-APT for Kindergarten, previous schooling experience, age, and other factors. **Ideally students will be placed with their peer group.**
- Students will usually start school within one to five days of their assessment and registration.

### Participation

- Depending on age, progression, and language acquisition, students will attend NC classes for one to six months, not to exceed one school year.
- Students will then be transitioned to their home school which is usually their neighborhood school depending on availability of ELL services.

### Transitions

- Transitions take place over approximately a two week period involving families and students as well as principals, counselors, teachers, secretaries and the Family Liaison.
- In an effort to make secondary transitions as seamless as possible, NC staff endeavors to transition students at semester or quarter breaks.

### Important Program Dates

- If students arrive to the U.S. after May 1st of any given year, they will most likely complete the year at the NC and return to the NC again in the fall. In most cases, six weeks is an insufficient amount of time for a student of any age or grade to reach the required benchmarks for transition.

# WHO IS A LEGAL REFUGEE?

In the Refugee Act of 1980, P.L. No. 96-212, Congress codified and strengthened the United States' historic policy of aiding individuals fleeing persecution in their homelands. The Refugee Act of 1980 provided a formal definition of "refugee":

***A LEGAL REFUGEE IS SOMEONE WHO HAS FLED HIS OR HER COUNTRY BECAUSE OF A "WELL-FOUNDED FEAR OF PERSECUTION FOR REASONS OF RACE, RELIGION, NATIONALITY, SOCIAL GROUP, OR POLITICAL OPINION." A REFUGEE HAS TO HAVE LEFT HIS OR HER HOME COUNTRY AND BEEN GRANTED REFUGEE STATUS IN A COUNTRY OF ASYLUM.***

According to a 2009 report by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), forty-two million people around the world were uprooted from their homes due to conflict or persecution. Of this number, sixteen million were considered refugees, while twenty-six million were displaced within their own countries or were considered asylum-seekers in other countries. Approximately 45% of the world's refugees are under eighteen years of age.

In 1980, Congress formalized the Refugee Resettlement Program in the Refugee Act of 1980, which included the United Nations criteria for refugee status and set the legal basis for the Refugee Admissions Program. An individual applying for refugee status in the United States must first have been designated a refugee by the UNHCR. After having been so designated, the individual can apply for refugee entrance into a number of countries willing to accept refugees.

Individuals under consideration for refugee status entrance into the United States must first go through a series of interviews with Immigration Officers who travel to the countries of initial asylum. As part of that process, an individual must complete a detailed application, a family tree and biographical information, and must go through background and security checks. In addition, an applicant must also go through a thorough medical screening.

Once the application is completed and approved, the applicant's name and case is presented by the U.S. State Department to a roundtable of Voluntary Refugee Resettlement Agencies who gather weekly in Washington, D.C., for national agency distributions. At this point, cases are turned over to local agencies to provide appropriate interpreting and resettling services for arriving refugees. The actual arrival of the refugee may not occur for several months, or several years, depending on circumstances beyond the control of the local agencies.

Once refugee families reach the United States or their country of asylum, they face many risk factors:

- Traumatic experiences and psychological adjustment
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Language barriers
- Expectations to follow resettlement program rules
- Pressures to learn English
- Pressures to supply for large families
- Living in poverty
- Student disconnect from education
- Parent disconnect from education
- Discrimination
- Inter-generational conflict
- Immigration policies

# QUALIFICATIONS AND CRITERIA FOR ATTENDANCE

## Refugee

- Refugee Resettlement program participant
- Been in the U.S. less than one year
- No English proficiency

## New to the United States

- Not in a Refugee Resettlement program
- Been in the U.S. less than one year and has not previously attended U.S. schools
- No English proficiency
- Possible migrant family

### **Students NOT in a Refugee Resettlement Program**

Students who do NOT come through the CSI Refugee Center or any other resettlement agency, but have been in the United States less than one year, and have no English proficiency, are eligible to attend the NC. However, schools will follow this process:

- Register and assess students as any other ELL student using the ACCESS 2.0 Online Screener or W-APTK (Kindergarten).
- If a student has no English proficiency, interrupted or limited schooling, and scores Level 1.5 or lower on the ACCESS Screener, serious consideration can be given to attending the NC.
- Contact the NC to review the student's ACCESS results and discuss options.
- Discuss options with the parents making them aware of the following factors:
  - Students will more than likely need to spend additional time on a bus to cross school boundary lines.
  - Students will be in a classroom with other students with varying grade levels (e.g., K-5 or 6-12).
  - Students will be in a classroom with students who speak several different languages.
  - Students will transition to their home school after a period of time depending on their language and behavior acquisitions which will require a transfer to their home school sometime during the year.
- If the student has some English proficiency and scores 1.5 or higher on the ACCESS, students need to remain at their home school and be provided supports as an LEP1.

# HOW IS THE NEWCOMER CENTER FUNDED?

Currently, the NC is partially funded by the Refugee School Impact Grant in partnership with the College of Southern Idaho's Refugee Resettlement program and supported by the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The purpose of the grant is to provide support to local school systems that are affected by significant numbers of refugee children. However, any student who attends the NC brings to TFSD the same amount of funding that local students receive from the State of Idaho based upon average daily attendance (ADA). Additional funding for supplemental support also comes from the Title I, II, and Title III of the Federal Government's Every Student Succeed Act (ESSA) awarded to districts with high-poverty schools, teacher quality, and limited English proficient populations.

# NEWCOMER CENTER REGISTRATION

Once the NC has been notified of new students, registration and assessment appointments are set. Families and students meet with the appropriate NC teacher (depending on the student's age), the Family Liaison and an interpreter for the purposes of assessment and registration paperwork completion.

- ***In most cases, identification will be verified with a Department of Homeland Security: U.S. Customs and Border Protection Form I-94.***
- ***For address verification, Rental Verifications will be received via the refugee resettlement agency that has assisted the family procure housing.***
- ***Most refugee families will have NO other documentation available.***

## **Unique Challenges When Registering Refugee Students**

### **Birth Dates**

In the U.S., where most grade placements are based on age, schools are often not sure what to do with refugee students who may not know their actual date of birth or who arrive with incorrect birth dates on their documentation. This can be related to many factors:

- **Calendars:** Some cultures use a completely different calendar than what we use in the U.S. Other populations many not use calendars at all (e.g., calendars were banned for a period of time in Afghanistan.)
- **Determination of Birth Dates:** Birth dates are determined differently throughout the world. In some cultures, time in the womb is counted as part of the child's age. In other cultures, only parts of the birth date are deemed worth remembering (e.g., the day of one's birth [Monday or Saturday] or the year.) Some populations recall the weather, season, or event that occurred near their birth. If a child is born during a traumatic time like war, this could also impact the recollection of the birth date.
- **Significance of Birth Dates:** In some cultures, all birthdays are celebrated on a particular day (e.g., everyone's birthday in Vietnam is celebrated on New Year's Day.) Some cultures or families do not observe birthdays at all.
- **Cultural Differences:** Cultural practices can impact child development and school readiness as well. Some cultures use different methods to determine children's school readiness other than age (e.g., some cultures in Southeast Asia determine a child is ready to start school when he can wrap an arm over his head and reach his opposite ear.)

- **Eating Habits and Malnutrition:** American children have access to more nutrition and more protein than many poorer nations. Newcomer children who have spent time in refugee camps or other impoverished situations may be smaller than their peers. Most students will not have had access to processed food of any kind and may not react well to them. Some students might be lactose intolerant.
- **Birth Dates Assigned by Officials:** Sometimes officials registering refugees may assign a standardized date such as January 1<sup>st</sup>, or they may only be required to note the year. Occasionally, a child's birth date may have been incorrectly noted due to a clerical error at some point in the refugee journey.
- **Birth Dates Assigned by Family:** For refugee families who flee their homes without important documents or for whom birth documentation is unavailable, caregivers may guess at a child's age and date of birth. This is especially likely to occur with refugee children who are separated at some point from their parents and are cared for by another family. Alternatively, the child's birth date may have been changed to conceal some family history (such as the timing of a birth before marriage or indicating a different parentage), or to gain some advantage during migration.

### **Free and Reduced Lunch Program Eligibility**

Families participating in refugee resettlement programs are eligible for federally prescribed benefits. Benefits vary from state to state, but in Idaho, each family is eligible for food stamps based on their limited income. As they become employed, those benefits are reduced or terminated according to the same standards as any other person in the state.

### **Transcripts**

Documentation of previous schooling for most refugee students is rare; transcripts are almost non-existent. NC staff will do as much as possible while the student is attending class at the NC to follow up with parents and possibly refugee agencies to acquire transcripts, especially for secondary students. In most cases, transcripts will need to be either re-created or developed from classes attended in the U.S.

### **Fees**

For elementary students, no fees are charged for the first enrollment at the NC or at their home school. Once a new year starts, they are required to pay registration fees just like any other student.

For secondary students, a nominal fee is charged to help offset the cost of PE uniforms, lockers, and agendas. Students are also required to have activity cards. Currently, the CSI Refugee Resettlement Program pays for an activity card for the first enrollment at the NC or their home school. Once a new year starts, students are required to pay registration fees and activity card fees just like any other student.

# TRANSITIONS AND TRANSFERS

All students who attend the NC will eventually be transitioned to their home school (or whatever school has the appropriate services; ideally, their neighborhood school.) When these students have fulfilled the necessary criteria and benchmarks required and the NC teachers feel the student is ready to transition, contact will be made with the schools to coordinate transitions.

## **Elementary (K-5)**

- Once it has been determined that the student is ready to transition, contact will be made with the building principal to determine a class for the students.
- As much as possible, meetings will be arranged between the NC teacher, the receiving teacher and the ELL teacher to discuss a student's Educational Learning Plan (ELP) and Assessment Accommodation and discuss any behavior issues or teaching strategies for that student.
- Parents are notified and, when possible, a building tour is arranged for family members and students with the Family Liaison.
- Arrangements are made to either meet at the student's new school or at home to fill out any additional registration paperwork with the Family Liaison.
- Any changes to bus stops or times will be communicated to the family and students.

## **Secondary Level (6-12)**

- Once it has been determined that the student is ready to transition, contact will be made with the building principal, ELL teacher(s), registrars and counselors to facilitate the transition. In some cases, students will begin their transition by taking classes at their new school on a part-time or half-day schedule.
- Parents are notified and, when possible, a building tour is arranged for the family and students with the Family Liaison.
- Arrangements are made to either meet at the student's new school or at home to fill out any additional registration paperwork with the Family Liaison.
- Any changes to bus stops or times will be communicated to the family and students by the family liaison.

Once students have transitioned to the home school, the responsibility for the student is placed upon the school site classroom teacher and site ELL teacher. The primary classroom becomes their new home room and will be the main area for instruction.

The liaison may be contacted for extenuating circumstances, but all efforts should be made to take care of the student and concerns at their new school.

# BENCHMARKS FOR TRANSITION

## Exiting Criteria

**NOTE: These Benchmarks were compiled based on and in collaboration with the WIDA Standards Framework Can-Do Descriptors**

### Elementary

Meets the following WIDA Level One "Can-Do Descriptors"	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
<b>K</b>	Point to stated pictures, words, phrases Follow one-step oral directions Match oral statements to objects, figures or illustrations	Name objects, people, pictures Answer WH- (who, what, when, where, which) questions	Match icons and symbols to words, phrases or environmental print  Identify concepts about print and text features	Label objects, pictures, diagrams Draw in response to a prompt Produce icons, symbols, words, phrases to convey messages
<b>1 - 2</b>	Follow modeled, one-step oral directions (e.g., "Find a pencil.") Identify pictures of everyday objects as stated orally (e.g., in books) Point to real-life objects reflective of content-related vocabulary or oral statements Mimic gestures or movement associated with statements (e.g., "This is my left hand.")	Repeat simple words, phrases, and memorized chunks of language Respond to visually supported (e.g., calendar) questions of academic content with one word or phrase Identify and name everyday objects Participate in whole group chants and songs	Identify symbols, icons, and environmental print Connect print to visuals Match real-life familiar objects to labels Follow directions using diagrams or pictures	Copy written language Communicate through drawings Label familiar objects or pictures
<b>3 - 5</b>	Point to stated pictures, words, or phrases Follow one-step oral directions (e.g., physically or through drawings) Identify objects, figures, people from oral statements or questions (e.g., "Which one is a rock?") Match classroom oral language to daily routines	Express basic needs or conditions Name pre-taught objects, people, diagrams, or pictures Recite words or phrases from pictures of everyday objects and oral modeling Answer yes/no and choice questions	Match icons or diagrams with words/concepts Identify cognates from first language, as applicable Make sound/symbol/word relations Match illustrated words/phrases in differing contexts (e.g., on the board, in a book)	Label objects, pictures, or diagrams from word/phrase banks Communicate ideas by drawing Copy words, phrases, and short sentences Answer oral questions with single words

**Secondary:**

Meets the following WIDA Level One "Can-Do Descriptors"	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
<b>6-8</b>	Follow one-step oral commands/instructions Match social language to visual/graphic displays Identify objects, people, or places from oral statements/questions using gestures (e.g., pointing) Match instructional language with visual representation (e.g., "Use a sharpened pencil.")	Answer yes/no and choice questions Begin to use general and high frequency vocabulary Repeat words, short phrases, memorized chunks Answer select WH- questions (e.g., "who," "what," "when," "where") within context of lessons or personal experiences	Associate letters with sounds and objects Match content-related objects/pictures to words Identify common symbols, signs, and words Recognize concepts of print Find single word responses to WH- questions (e.g., "who," "what," "when," "where") related to illustrated text Use picture dictionaries/illustrated glossaries	Draw content-related pictures Produce high frequency words Label pictures and graphs Create vocabulary/concept cards Generate lists from pre-taught words/phrases and word banks (e.g., create menu from list of food groups)
<b>9 - 12</b>	Point to or show basic parts, components, features, characteristics, and properties of objects, organisms, or persons named orally Match everyday oral information to pictures, diagrams, or photographs Group visuals by common traits named orally (e.g., "These are polygons.") Identify resources, places, products, figures from oral statements	Answer yes/no or choice questions within context of lessons or personal experiences Provide identifying information about self Name everyday objects and pre-taught vocabulary Repeat words, short phrases, memorized chunks of language	Match visual representations to words/phrases Read everyday signs, symbols, schedules, and school-related words/phrases Respond to WH- questions related to illustrated text Use references (e.g., picture dictionaries, bilingual glossaries, technology)	Label content-related diagrams, pictures from word/phrase banks Provide personal information on forms read orally Produce short answer responses to oral questions with visual support Supply missing words in short sentences

## EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP

All students who attend school in the TFSD at the NC will be tracked throughout their educational career or their remaining time in the district. For both elementary and secondary students, evaluation and follow up will continue throughout the year, even after students have transitioned to the home school.

For all students:

- Grades are reviewed via Powerschool to gauge progress.
- Follow-up and site visits will include:
  - On-going contact with classroom teachers or other staff who work with the transitioned students.
  - Interviews with students regarding their adjustments to their new school setting and classes (social interactions, busing, lunch, understanding teachers and assignments, etc.)
  - On-going contact with ELL teachers for any concerns, red flags, or behavior issues that need to be addressed.
- Teacher-to-teacher communication including phone calls, emails, and face-to-face meetings will continue as needed.
- On-site classroom observations (for elementary students) will occur as time permits.
- Annual reviews of student scores on state assessments including ISAT and ACCESS will be done to chart growth and mastery and will be reported per state and federal laws.

# TIPS FOR TEACHERS

## **KEY POINTS**

A majority of newcomer students, regardless of their background, will more than likely struggle with or need explanations related to:

Classroom	Practical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making free-will choices</li> <li>• Thinking for themselves or responding to questions publicly</li> <li>• *Just because they seem compliant, does not mean they will be compliant</li> <li>• Relating to and addressing each other and teachers</li> <li>• Lining up (inherent need to be "first" – survival strategy)</li> <li>• Working with others in the classroom</li> <li>• Acceptable body language</li> <li>• Understanding personal space or boundaries</li> <li>• Raising a hand to speak and not being afraid to be singled out</li> <li>• Working independently and/or quietly</li> <li>• Sitting for long periods of time</li> <li>• Handling the constantly changing classroom dynamic (e.g., centers, blocks, etc.)</li> <li>• Discipline in the school context</li> <li>• Talking about concerns or even knowing they are free to express concerns</li> <li>• Responding to emergency drills or lock downs</li> <li>• Responding to alarms or loud noises</li> <li>• Responding to uniformed personnel</li> <li>• Using facilities within school (e.g., gender specific restrooms, cafeterias, gyms, playground equipment, etc.)</li> <li>• Cleaning up after themselves and putting trash in trash receptacles</li> <li>• Valuing and maintaining materials and supplies in the classroom. Students may view these items as expendable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riding a bus</li> <li>• Knowing the bus will take them back home</li> <li>• Attending school every day on time and expecting to attend all day</li> <li>• Notifying the school if they are going to be absent</li> <li>• Following schedules and being on time</li> <li>• Wearing or not wearing a uniform</li> <li>• Wearing socially acceptable attire based on age or gender</li> <li>• Not being accustomed to cold or inclement weather</li> <li>• Wearing weather appropriate clothing</li> <li>• Following a schedule or rotating classes and/or teachers</li> <li>• Changing clothes for PE in an open locker room</li> <li>• Preparing for or understanding what field trips are</li> <li>• Drinking cow's milk or having any dairy products</li> <li>• Being accustomed to eating foods sweetened with sugar</li> <li>• Being accustomed to drinking anything other than water</li> <li>• Being familiar with indoor plumbing (e.g., may want to flush toilets multiple times, etc.)</li> <li>• Being familiar with electricity (e.g., may want to constantly turn lights on and off, etc.)</li> <li>• Being in the habit of washing their hands</li> <li>• Knowing how to use tissues or using too many</li> <li>• Using too much hand sanitizer</li> </ul>

## **Working with Refugee or Newcomer Parents**

Many factors affect the involvement of refugee parents and other guardians in their children's education in the U.S. including language, expectations for parental involvement, expectations of and for teachers, isolation, and trauma. Refugee parents must also adjust to unfamiliar cultural values and behavioral patterns that they see in their children adopting to a new school environment, some of which may be considered disrespectful in their culture.

Despite these difficulties, involving refugee parents and/or guardians in their children's education is critical for the success of refugee children in U.S. schools. Children whose parents are involved in their education are more likely to excel in school, to attend school regularly, and continue with higher education. For refugee children, parental involvement is particularly critical considering the numerous challenges these children face in adapting to a new school system. In many countries, parents are not encouraged to participate in their child's education. In these cultures, it would be disrespectful for parents to assume they could fill the role of the teacher at home.

<b>Parental Involvement</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>NC Program</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugee parents may be hesitant to participate in parent/teacher conferences or other school events because they don't understand English, or they may feel uncomfortable with or intimidated by the American school system</li> <li>• Refugee parents may not understand what services are available for their children</li> <li>• Parents may be unaware of American expectations regarding parental involvement</li> <li>• Refugee parents may not have transportation or be able to attend school activities scheduled during business hours</li> <li>• For many parents, regular school attendance may be a new concept</li> <li>• Parents may not be aware of their children's assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate with local refugee resettlement agencies and community-based organizations in assessing parents' needs and/or misunderstandings about the school system</li> <li>• Offer orientation sessions for new families either at the beginning of the year or throughout the year</li> <li>• Welcome videos can be helpful in introducing the U.S. educational systems</li> <li>• Change the time of day in which parent activities are scheduled to accommodate variable work schedules</li> <li>• Stress in initial orientation sessions and in translated, written materials that regular school attendance is obligatory in the U.S.</li> <li>• Provide translated form letters for parents informing them of children's work and/or expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All refugee parents who come through the CSI Refugee center are required to attend an extensive orientation</li> <li>• Registration and assessment appointments are made through the center and interpreters are present</li> <li>• Registration includes explanations of parental involvement, student academic, attendance, behavioral, and some cultural expectations</li> <li>• Family nights are scheduled, home visits are made and parent/teacher conferences are held and include interpreters as much as possible</li> <li>• Multi-language letterhead is available and is used to send information home</li> <li>• District-approved interpreter list is available at school sites</li> </ul>
<b>Language</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>NC Program</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents may be unable to understand reports from the school regarding the child's performance at school and may be unaware of school events</li> <li>• Parents may not understand homework assignments or have the academic/English skills to help their child.</li> <li>• Parents may be hesitant to participate in school events due to language barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate written materials from the school whenever possible</li> <li>• Develop translated form letters to distribute to parents regarding major school events like holidays, parent/ teacher conferences</li> <li>• Ensure that refugee children have access to needed tutoring through school or community-based organizations</li> <li>• Restate and model expectations for the homework pages/assignment (teacher or peer buddy; example)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-language letterhead is available and used to send information home</li> <li>• All major events are communicated to the CSI Refugee center and parents are notified that all of these activities will continue when their children transition</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate with community-based agencies or others to ensure that interpreters are available during conferences</li> </ul>	
<b>Role of Teachers</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>NC Program</b>
<p>Depending upon the family's country of origin, refugee parents and children may not perceive that they matter to teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many parents and students may view teachers as experts and may not know that teachers benefit from direct communication regarding the needs of the children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirm in written documents and parent/teacher conferences that teachers both welcome and expect parental involvement</li> <li>Provide parents with concrete suggestions such as talking to their children regularly about school.</li> <li>Let them know they can volunteer at school events, monitor their child's progress, and ensure homework is completed</li> <li>Invite parental feedback on how they believe their child is doing and affirm that you are interested in working with them to help their child be successful at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family nights are held during the time students spend at the NC</li> <li>Encourage parents to come to the classroom and see what their students do on a daily basis</li> <li>Encourage parents to help their students with homework</li> <li>Encourage parents to practice English together</li> <li>Let parents know they can track their student's progress at any time on Powerschool</li> </ul>
<b>Isolation</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>NC Program</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of access to sufficient public transportation can be a barrier to active involvement in school activities</li> <li>Limited English language skills and unfamiliarity with a new environment can lead many refugee parents to feel isolated in a new country</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain open communication with parents regarding any transportation barriers</li> <li>Coordinate with community-based organizations on arranging transportation services for parent meetings or events at school</li> <li>Host social events (such as potlucks and picnics) to help develop relationships with refugee parents</li> <li>Draw on the skills of refugee parents and invite them to volunteer at school events in capacities that do not require substantial English language skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When Family nights are held, transportation is provided</li> <li>Home visits can be made at any time there are concerns</li> <li>A considerable effort is put forth into learning names, faces, family connections and cultures</li> </ul>

## **Working with Refugee or Newcomer Students**

It is easy to assume that refugee children have basic knowledge about school customs and the English language when, in fact, they are constantly being exposed to new concepts, situations, and words. Here are some common assumptions to watch out for:

<p><b>SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know what to do with crayons, scissors, glue, pencils, sharpeners, paintbrushes, etc.</li> <li>• Understand everyday words used in school like recess, homework, lunch, late, on time, etc.</li> <li>• Have experience sitting at a desk all day</li> <li>• Have used public restrooms with separate stalls that are gender specific or flush toilets</li> <li>• Have ever seen a playground or are familiar with sports equipment</li> <li>• Have ever been to or understand what a library is</li> <li>• Know that beckoning with your hand or finger means “come here”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate all implements (pencils, scissors, etc.) in daily activities to build familiarity and hand-eye coordination</li> <li>• Continually encourage students to use English at school and at home</li> <li>• MODEL – MODEL – MODEL – Showing while explaining works much better than strictly verbal instructions and helps make the connection between the words and the action or behavior</li> <li>• Provide orientations on playground equipment, library expectations, using restrooms, lunch room expectations, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand what the teacher is saying just because they are nodding and smiling</li> <li>• Are accustomed to adults talking to them individually</li> <li>• Believe that teachers are available to help them</li> <li>• Know that they can express their opinions without being reprimanded or hit</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuously speak to them utilizing their names and making eye contact</li> <li>• Have the children repeat back instructions</li> <li>• Continuously reward the students with positive reinforcement to build trust and confidence</li> </ul>
<p><b>SAFETY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think that they are safe at school</li> <li>• Know that when they get on a bus, they will be able to return home</li> <li>• Believe that teachers will be helpful and kind to them and not hurt them</li> <li>• Trust coaches, police officers or other people in uniforms</li> <li>• Know what the fire alarm sounds like or what to do</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give students orientations on fire drills so they know what to expect</li> <li>• Have police and/or fire personnel visit the classroom to build trust and understanding that police and fire personnel are there to help and not be feared</li> </ul>
<p><b>DAILY LIFE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat breakfast and lunch every day</li> <li>• Are living with people they know</li> <li>• Can talk to their parents about school</li> <li>• Are comfortable in American clothing or are familiar with American hygiene habits</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly encourage students to go eat breakfast before class so they build the habit</li> <li>• Sit with them for some lunch times and show them how to open their milk, how to eat certain foods, and how to clean up after themselves</li> <li>• Build the routine of hand washing, particularly prior to meals</li> </ul>

# REFUGEE BACKGROUNDBERS

Below you will find links to refugee backgrounders – these are based on refugee’s COUNTRY OF ORIGIN/Nationality (not necessarily their Birth Country). Each link offers information about education and parent engagement for that group, as well as cultural information, language, and significant points to remember and/or teaching strategies. There are other links at the bottom of each page to sites with additional information pertaining to that cultural group.

Afghani students:

<https://therefugeecenter.org/resources/afghani-refugee-students/>

Bhutanese students:

<https://therefugeecenter.org/how-to-teach-bhutanese-students-in-your-classroom/>

Congolese (DRC) students:

<https://therefugeecenter.org/how-to-teach-congolese-students-in-your-classroom/>

Eritrean students:

<https://therefugeecenter.org/how-to-teach-eritrean-students-in-your-classroom-2/>

Iranian students:

<https://therefugeecenter.org/how-to-teach-iranian-students-in-your-classroom/>

Iraqi students:

<https://therefugeecenter.org/how-to-teach-iraqi-students-in-your-classroom/>

Nepali students:

<https://therefugeecenter.org/how-to-teach-nepalese-students-in-your-classroom/>

Sudanese students:

<https://therefugeecenter.org/how-to-teach-south-sudanese-students-in-your-classroom/>

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Are refugees legal immigrants?**

**YES** - Refugees have all the appropriate legal documents to live and work in the United States. They are issued I-94 forms which serve as their arrival record upon entering the U.S. Issuance of an I-94 confirms that an immigrant or refugee has entered the U.S. legally and will apply for Social Security numbers within a few weeks of arrival. Refugees are considered Non-Resident Aliens. Within the first two weeks after arriving in the United States, families go through orientations on everything from currency, paying rent, medical appointments, and schools to using the Roman calendar. Refugees accepted for entry into the United States must sign agreements to accept any appropriate employment when offered and must sign a promissory note to pay back the cost of their air-flight to the United States.

## **What rights do refugees have?**

When an individual is granted refugee status in the United States, the individual is granted the same rights as any other foreign-born individual who is a legal resident. This includes: freedom of thought, freedom of movement, and freedom from torture and degrading treatment. These individuals should also benefit from the same basic economic and social rights as other foreign-born individuals.

## **Do refugee students take funding away from American students?**

**NO** – All supplemental funds received from either the federal or state level are in addition to the general fund that provides for all students.

## **Do refugees receive benefits from federal or state social services?**

**YES** - But only for limited periods of time. Refugees arriving in the U.S. are eligible for federally prescribed benefits. While some benefit levels after arrival vary from state to state and resettlement program to program, many are standard. The family is eligible for a medical card for the first eight months in the U.S., with some extensions possible for families with children. Each family is eligible for food stamps based on their income. As they become employed, those benefits are reduced or terminated according to the same standards as any other American in that state. Each voluntary agency resettling refugees is provided an amount per refugee that goes to pay for the initial resettlement of the refugee family. Each national agency determines how much of that is passed on to the local affiliate or agency. During the first thirty days, all individuals between the ages of eighteen and sixty-five, that have not been determined as disabled or handicapped, are expected to participate in English language classes and job search activities. Failure to participate can lead to loss of benefits.

## **Are refugee students immunized?**

**Yes** - All students who attend the TFSD NC adhere to district policy on immunizations. Refugee families have been assessed medically upon arrival to the U.S. and have been immunized per U.S. medical standards.

# RESOURCES AND WEBSITES

<p>Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services <a href="http://www.brycs.org">www.brycs.org</a></p> <p>Cultural Orientation Resource Center – Center for Applied Linguistics <a href="http://www.culturalorientation.net">www.culturalorientation.net</a> <a href="http://www.cal.org">www.cal.org</a></p> <p>IRC - International Rescue Committee <a href="http://theIRC.org">theIRC.org</a></p> <p>CSI Refugee Programs <a href="http://refugeecenter.csi.edu">refugeecenter.csi.edu</a></p> <p>US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants <a href="http://www.refugees.org">www.refugees.org</a></p> <p>Office of Civil Rights <a href="http://www.state.gov/s/ocr">www.state.gov/s/ocr</a> www2.ed.gov</p> <p>US Department of Health &amp; Human Services <a href="http://www.hhs.gov">www.hhs.gov</a></p>	<p>IOR – Idaho Office for Refugees <a href="http://www.idahorefugees.org">http://www.idahorefugees.org</a></p> <p>US Department of Homeland Security <a href="http://www.dhs.gov">www.dhs.gov</a></p> <p>US Immigration and Naturalization Services <a href="http://www.uscis.gov">www.uscis.gov</a></p> <p>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - UN Refugee Agency <a href="http://www.unhcr.org">www.unhcr.org</a> <a href="http://www.unrefugees.org">www.unrefugees.org</a></p> <p>Cultural Orientation Project <a href="http://www.culturalorientation.net">www.culturalorientation.net</a></p> <p>Independent School District of Boise City <a href="http://www.boiseschools.org">www.boiseschools.org</a></p> <p>CIA - Central Intelligence Agency <a href="http://www.cia.gov">www.cia.gov</a></p>	<p>ORR – Office of Refugee Resettlement <a href="http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs">www.acf.hhs.gov/programs</a></p> <p>BRIA - Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance <a href="http://www.otda.state.ny.us/main/programs/bria">www.otda.state.ny.us/main/programs/bria</a></p> <p>Teaching Tolerance <a href="http://www.tolerance.org">www.tolerance.org</a></p> <p>National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition &amp; Language Instruction Educational Programs <a href="http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/library">www.ncela.gwu.edu/library</a></p> <p>US State Department <a href="http://www.state.gov">www.state.gov</a></p> <p>Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children <a href="http://www.womenscommission.org">www.womenscommission.org</a></p> <p>Center for Multicultural Human Services <a href="http://www.cmhsweb.org">www.cmhsweb.org</a></p> <p>Refugee Center Online <a href="https://therefugeecenter.org/">https://therefugeecenter.org/</a></p>
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*Acknowledgements & Disclaimer*

*This document was compiled using materials, references, and information from:*

*College of Southern Idaho Refugee Programs Materials*

*CSI Refugee Center – Volunteer Handbook*

*CSI Refugee Programs Website*

*Refugee Center Online Website Materials*

*Bridging Refugee Youth Children's Services Website Materials*

*Refugee Children in U.S. Schools: A Toolkit for Teachers and School Personnel – Tool 1: The Birthdates of Refugee Children and Impact on Grade Placement*

*Promising Practices – Catholic Charities, Migration, and Refugee Services of Louisville and Jefferson County Public Schools*

*The Refugee School Impact Grant: Facilitating the Integration of Refugee Children into American Schools*

*Welcoming and Orienting Newcomer Students to U.S. Schools*

*Refugee 101*

*UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency Publication, Protecting Refugees and the Role of UNHCR, 2007-2008*

*International Rescue Committee Website Materials*

*Refugee Children & Youth Backgrounders – November 2006*

*Refugee Backgrounders – November 2006*

*Indiana Department of Education – Language Minority & Migrant Programs Report*

*MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2007 – Characteristics of Immigrant and Refugee Children*

*Iranian Refugees' Alliance Inc. Website*

# NON-DISCRIMINATORY AND COMPARABLE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. The 1970 Federal Memorandum on Identification of Discrimination and Denial of Services on the Basis of National Origin clarified the Title VI requirements of school districts to provide equal educational opportunities to all children, regardless of national origin or language. It also states that school districts have the responsibility to adequately notify national origin, minority group parents of school activities which are called to the attention of other parents. Such notice, in order to be adequate, may have to be provided in a language other than English. Title VI Statutes are enforced by the Office for Civil Rights. For expanded details and resources, please refer to:

Resource	Web Address
U.S. Office for Civil Rights	<a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ocr">www.hhs.gov/ocr</a>
U.S. Office of Health and Human Services	<a href="http://www.hhs.gov">www.hhs.gov</a>
Idaho Department of Education	<a href="http://www.sde.idaho.gov">www.sde.idaho.gov</a>
Twin Falls School District Board of Education Policy	<a href="http://www.tfsd.org/">www.tfsd.org/</a>
Elementary and Secondary Education Act	<a href="http://www.ed.gov/policy">www.ed.gov/policy</a>
The Provision of an Equal Education Opportunity to Limited English Proficient Students	<a href="http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr">www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr</a>
Immigration and Nationality Act	<a href="http://www.uscis.gov">www.uscis.gov</a>

- ➔ **Schools *MUST* be a safe haven for immigrants or refugees regardless of their status. It is not the school's duty to collect immigration status documentation or even ask questions that might reveal immigration status. Department of Human Services and resettlement agencies collect that information to provide benefits specific to different immigrant populations, but the school's job is to provide education and be concerned with educational matters, not immigration status issues. Even though refugee students arrive with the proper documentation of their refugee status, the schools are prohibited from requesting that information for any purposes.**
  
- ➔ **Schools may ask for immunization documentation (or exemption for medical or religious reasons) and ask for proof of residency and transcripts to verify age (birth certificates, hospital records, or affidavits can verify age.)**
  
- ➔ **Schools *MAY NOT*:**
  - ➔ **Refuse enrollment to students who do not provide a birth certificate or Social Security Number**
  - ➔ **Ask about immigration status or for documentation**
  - ➔ **Treat students differently based on undocumented status**
  - ➔ **Ask questions that might expose the immigration status of parents or students**
  - ➔ **Refuse participation in programs based on status**
  - ➔ **Treat students with disparity – different rules according to individual/group characteristics**

- ***Require application for Social Security Number***
- ***Contact Immigration and Customs Enforcement about an undocumented student or allowing Immigration and Customs Enforcement access to the school without warrant or subpoena***