Providing Social-Emotional Support for Students

I have seen the teachers and leaders I support be extra compassionate, extra supportive and extra available.

– Educator response to Colorín Colorado's survey on support for immigrant families

Key Takeaways

- Issues around immigration may be affecting students' social-emotional health.
- Non-immigrant students may also have questions or concerns about current events related to immigration.
- There are a number of age-appropriate strategies schools, early childhood programs, and individual teachers can use to help address those challenges in the classroom and beyond.

See this information online

Providing Social-Emotional Support for Students

- View online: http://www.colorincolorado.org/immigration/guide/student
- Download PDF: http://www.colorincolorado.org/immigration/guide/student-pdf

Complete guide: http://www.colorincolorado.org/immigration/guide

Excerpted from *How to Support Immigrant Students and Families.*

Help students maintain their routine

Why this matters

Having a safe and familiar place to go can make a huge difference for students who are experiencing uncertainty, trauma, or stress; a normal routine can offer stability and distraction from worries at home. One respondent to our survey writes, "For kids as young as the ones I teach, keeping the routine going is vital, as well as reassuring them that we love them and want them here in school with us."

Tips for getting started

- Remind staff members of the importance of helping kids maintain their routines.
- Try to avoid extra disruptions to the extent possible.
- Encourage teachers to look at their daily routines and adjust as needed.

Reviewing students' schedules

You may also wish to look at students' schedules and look for ways to reduce the number disruptions and transitions where possible. ELL administrator Kristina Robertson writes,

Think about what kinds of supports are available in the school environment if students have had very little school experience or if they have experienced trauma. These students may benefit from a lot of structure and attention from the same small group of people on a regular basis and a regular schedule.

For elementary students, this may mean reducing the number of transitions and classroom switches throughout the day, which can be overwhelming – this is a particular challenge for ELLs who are behind and being pulled out for multiple kinds of services and support. For secondary students, consider connecting students with adult mentors that can provide a check-in each day, as well as a place to take a break when needed. (Personal communication, November 28, 2018)

The strength of consistency

Principal Mark Gaither of Wolfe Street Academy (Baltimore, Maryland) writes,

> *Consider the strength of consistency in stressful, uncertain times. The advice for educators I would say is the same as for many situations where trauma is in play: be at work every day, listen, take the time to connect (even if it is not about the specific fear or stressor but instead about the positives in a kid's life); be aware of indicators of critical stress that might lead to self-harm; educate yourself about how kids respond to stress so that you don't misunderstand inappropriate behavior as "being bad" but see it for what it is, a response to traumatic stress… That is where letting them (kids, families, etc.) know that you are a consistent member of their world can really help. (Personal communication, February 24, 2017)*

Encourage teachers and staff to build relationships with students

Why this matters

Sometimes what students need most is for someone to listen. ELL administrator Kristina Robertson notes that this is a particularly important role educators can play since many immigrant students are aware of their parents' already high levels of stress and don't wish to worry them further. She writes, "Many immigrant students I've worked with have said, 'I don't want to say anything to my mom because she is already so worried.'" Anyone can play this role for kids, including bus drivers, cafeteria staff, or the school nurse can have an impact by taking a few minutes to check in with a child.

In our webinar with UCLA researchers about the impact of immigration policy on schools (2018), Dr. Patricia Gándara also encourages teachers to continue to "share with students a deep sense of caring and a real relationship; more than ever, it is important for teachers to know what is going on with their kids."

Tips for getting started

Without singling students out, look for ways to check in and find one-on-one or small group time:

- at lunch
- during group work
- before or after school
- during another activity or class.

In these conversations:

- Be mindful of protecting student privacy.
- Avoid drawing attention to your immigrant students in front of peers.
- Let students know they can talk to you at any time.
- Be as honest as possible and acknowledge the uncertainty of the moment as well as the difficulty of the challenges students are facing.
- Avoid platitudes such as, "I'm sure it will be fine," or "Everything will work out." Instead, try, "That sounds really hard. You can always talk to me when you need to."

- Determine whether students have someone they can talk to in their own language and help make those connections if needed.

Ideas from educators

In our 2017 on how schools are supporting immigrant students, teachers wrote that they are:

- *Allowing students to talk and share their feelings about what they are experiencing.*
- *Offering class time as a space for expressing concerns and sharing thoughts and attempt to have questions answered. They responded well to that opportunity.*

A number of respondents also shared specific steps they had taken to reach out to students by:

- letting students know that teachers could be trusted and would listen to their concerns
- trying to be as honest as possible with students and families, and acknowledge the uncertainty of the moment
- making an effort to check in with students.

See more information on challenges that immigrant students may be experiencing for important background on this topic, as well as ideas for supporting young children.

Bullying prevention

Read more about tips for protecting ELLs and immigrant students from bullying in this article.

Recommended videos

- Student story: When students share immigration concerns from home (Anne Marie Foerster Luu, ESOL Teacher – Maryland)

Using circle time

Connie Phelps, former Community Schools Director at Wolfe Street Academy, talks about the use of circle time, in which all students answer the same question, such as “What kinds of things make you want to come to school?” or “What can we do to help our friends who are having a hard time?” She noted that this kind of activity works best on more complex topics if the students are already used to doing it with more mundane topics.

Why this matters

There are lots of other ways that kids can express their emotions beyond conversation. The UCLA team shares the experience of an art teacher from Texas: "(M)any students drew and colored images of their parents and themselves being separated, or about people stalking/hunting their family" (Gándara & Ee, 2018a, p. 9).

Tips for getting started

Giving students strategies to express emotions and manage stress

You may wish to introduce this topic by asking students how they manage difficult topics – they may never have thought about it! Consider sharing the following activities that educators have recommended and giving students opportunities to practice these activities. You may also wish to invite a school counselor to lead a class discussion and share strategies such as:

- Drawing "what this means to me"
- Writing journal entries
- Writing letters to elected officials, as in this post-election activity from Larry Ferlazzo
- Creating comic books (See related video from NPR)
- Brainstorming ways that students do/can help each other from teacher Rosa Villalpando
- Activities to deal with stress such as breathing exercises, meditation, the arts, and sports
- Sharing other artistic activities, such as this musical about immigration
- Providing opportunities for students to share their stories (see our related article)
- Talking with trusted friends or adults
- Writing thoughts about current events on sticky notes posted in a public place

One teacher who responded to our survey wrote,

> *Having students keep journals can be effective. The journals are used for processing their learning, but at times, utilizing the journal to share their concerns and feelings. The journal can be kept between the student and the teacher or students may elect to share their journals with classmates. Teacher comments and feedback are a very important aspect…This is a safe way for students to express their thoughts and for teachers to identify student needs.*

Giving students the words they need to express themselves

Another important tool that can help students, particularly English language learners (ELLs), is to teach them words and phrases that will help express emotions, much in the way a teacher teaches academic language. Some strategies for this include:

- giving students sentence frames and sentence starters that illustrate how to express different feelings, manage interactions in the classroom, and resolve conflict
- providing these on a sheet in English and ELLs' native languages
- posting them on the wall.

ELL administrator Kristina Robertson writes,

> *One of our after-school workers said she has many bilingual students (mostly boys) who get into fights across cultures because they just don't have the words to express their frustration or needs, so their anger builds. How can we think about ways to intentionally teach language about feelings and appropriate ways to express emotion? We are so focused on teaching academic language and basic needs of following rules in a classroom that we overlook the need to learn how to express our emotions. This is a terrible feeling for a student who is sad or angry.* (Personal communication, November, 29, 2018)

Developing social-emotional skills

Help students develop their social-emotional skills with the following strategies:

- Introduce activities early in the year that give students practice in expressing themselves, both individually and in a group setting.
- Provide students a regular opportunity to share their thoughts, concerns, and questions.
- Look for opportunities to include social-emotional learning activities or themes in the classroom throughout the year.

Recommended resources

- How Do We Support Newcomers' Social-Emotional Needs? (U.S. Department of Education Newcomer Toolkit)
- How Teachers Can Help Immigrant Kids Feel Safe (Greater Good Magazine, UC Berkeley)
- *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child* by Cristina Igoa
- California Schools Help Unaccompanied Immigrant Students Combat Trauma, Language Barriers (EdSource)

Strategies for calming anxiety

- 8 Fun Breathing Exercises for Kids (Childhood 101)
- How to Teach Your Child Calm Breathing (Anxiety Canada)
- Calming Anxiety in Children (Coping Skills for Kids)

Resources from Re-imagining Migration

- What can schools do to meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of immigrant-origin students?
- What are some of the typical social-emotional challenges most relevant to immigrant-origin students?
- A Culturally Responsive Guide to Fostering the Inclusion of Immigrant-Origin Students

Take a closer look when you notice changes in a student's behavior

Why this matters

The impact of immigration issues on students can lead to changes in students' behavior. The American Psychological Association notes, "These stressful experiences can lead to a number of negative emotional and behavioral outcomes including anxiety, fear, depression, anger, social isolation and lack of a sense of belonging." The impacts can be especially severe on young children.

When such changes present themselves, it is critical to dig deeper to find the root cause, especially before taking action that will have serious, long-term consequences for the student. This is where having a relationship with the student can make a big difference. Viridiana Carrizales, co-founder and CEO of ImmSchools, says "An educator who does not have a relationship with their students is only going to see a kid who is misbehaving or disengaged" (Dillard, 2018, p. 45).

Often the first response to a change in behavior is a special education referral or disciplinary referral, which is not necessarily appropriate for the situation (see more on these issues below). It is also essential to use a team approach that includes a variety of perspectives, including that of the family and an interpreter or cultural liaison, in order to:

- address concerns or changes in student behavior
- ensure that families have access to all information in their home language.

Student stories

For some concrete examples of this issue, see the following stories included in this guide:

- A preschool child's experience with post-traumatic stress
- A young student's alarming change in behavior

Special education referrals

In their chapter on cultural dilemmas in *Teachers as Allies: Transformative Practices for Teaching DREAMers and Undocumented Students*, Dr. Eva K. Thorp, Dr. Sylvia Y. Sánchez, and Dr. Elaisa Sánchez Gosnell share the following experience. A teacher approached the group out of concern about an immigrant student's sudden change in behavior; the teacher was weighing whether or not to refer the student to special education. The team suggested that the teacher

make a home visit; upon doing so, the teacher learned that "(t)he child's father had recently been detained, no one in the family knew where he had been taken, and out of fear, the student's mother had left the country. The student was living under the care of her 18-year-old sibling" (p. 20).

Based on this information, the teacher was able to find a more appropriate avenue of support rather than a special education referral. Lori Dodson talks more about this issue in her video below, "Why not all changes in behavior require a special education."

Tips for getting started

If you are concerned about an immigrant student's behavior, consider looking at the following questions as you think about how to respond, always taking care to respect students' privacy.

- What do you know about the student and the student's home life?
- Is there a colleague who can provide some additional insight on the student's situation?
- Are there particular stressors impacting the student?
- Are any of the following issues playing a role?
    - Challenges in meeting basic needs
    - Immigration issues that impact students
    - Causes of stress and anxiety
- What is your school's protocol for behavior/discipline and is it appropriate in this case?
- Who should be part of the team to address this issue?
- What should next steps be?

Recommended resources

- Chapter 2: "Embracing Cultural Dilemmas" (Excerpt from *Teachers as Allies*)
- Fix School Discipline: School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
- What is restorative justice? (RestorativeJustice.org)
- Restorative Justice: Resources for Schools (Edutopia)

Recommended videos

- Why not all changes in behavior require a special education referral (Lori Dodson, ESOL Teacher – Maryland)
- What is like to grow up as an undocumented youth in America? (American Psychological Association)

School discipline policies: What they mean for immigrant students and families

For undocumented students, involvement in a disciplinary situation can have serious consequences, ranging from a negative impact on their immigration case to detention and deportation. *Teaching Tolerance* studies this issue in-depth in its Fall 2018 issue with the article, "The School-to-Deportation Pipeline," which examines the story of a high school student in Houston, Dennis Rivera-Sarmiento, who was nearly deported following an incident with a young woman he said had been bullying him. His reporting of that incident led to his arrest by his school's police officer, which flagged him for deportation back to his native Honduras. He has also been advised that his case brought his mother and siblings to the attention of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

His case earned a lot of attention, eventually resulting in his release. He has since graduated from high school and been accepted to three colleges, although his asylum case is still pending. His story highlights the high stakes for young people in his situation.

The Immigrant Legal Resource Center notes, "School disciplinary policies that involve local law enforcement often result in a student being exposed (to immigration enforcement). Conversely, school policies that don't involve local law enforcement will better protect immigrant students from being detained or deported" (ILRC Guide). You can read more about this issue in ILRC's brief, The School to Prison to Deportation Pipeline. The ILRC also recommends the information on school-wide positive behavioral intervention and supports from the Fix School Discipline website.

At a time when many schools are increasing security measures, it is important to consider:

- how to increase school safety while continuing to protect students' rights and maintain a welcoming environment for students and families
- what new measures and policies mean for immigrant students
- what role school resource officers play within the school
- what a policy addressing these issues might look like if none exists.

It is also important to reflect on how these issues impact immigrant families. For example, Dr. Thorp (2017) notes that some security measures dissuade immigrant families from entering the school, such as leaving a photo identification in the office.

Look for ways to make classroom connections

Why this matters

Connecting current events to the classroom can broaden student understanding of timely topics, increase empathy and engagement, draw upon students' unique experiences and perspectives, and empower students during a moment of uncertainty.

Teacher Anna Centi, who teaches newcomer students and refugees from Yemen in Dearborn, Michigan, also has found that students are more likely to tackle challenging material if they can relate to it. One book that has resonated with her students is *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park.

Tips for getting started

Brainstorm ideas

- Look for connections to your students' lives across the curriculum.
- Ask students to brainstorm ideas on what they would like to study.
- Consider using an inquiry-based or project-based learning approach that allows students to take the lead in identifying a question or problem to solve/research.

Look for local connections

- Assign students projects that focus on issues that apply to their own community.
- Identify community assets and resources that you can utilize. Look for opportunities to make connections with guest speakers, community members, or local organizations in the community that reflect students' lives and can be used as resources.
- Offer students opportunities to present their work in public, whether to classmates, parents, or community members through presentations, local media, and outreach.
- Encourage students to look for contributions members of their local community have made. (See more on this on idea from Dr. Sandra Duval.)

Use care with challenging topics

These topics can be difficult to navigate, particularly if they impact members of the class personally. One teacher notes that in her government class, "some students have been quite strident in supporting separation of families."

When discussing controversial topics:

- Do careful research and look for materials from well-established, trustworthy sources.
- Think about your own point of view and possible biases.
- Be well-prepared and anticipate the need to manage discussions on controversial topics.
- Consider the best way o approach the topic so as not to put students on the spot.
- Assure students that you will respect their privacy when introducing a topic like immigration and that they do not have to share any personal information to participate.
- Create a list of guidelines for respectful classroom discussion with the class.
- Look for strategies designed to increase student understanding and dialogue, such as dialogue circles and the activities compiled by from Facing History and Ourselves.
- Look for ways to foster students' empathy. (See ideas under "Teaching empathy.")

Recommended resources

- Classroom Connections: Immigration in the Curriculum (Colorín Colorado)
- *Teachers as Allies: Transformative Practices for Teaching DREAMers and Undocumented Students* (Teachers College Press)
- Teaching Difficult Topics: Educator Reflections edited by Larry Ferlazzo
- Discussing Difficult/Controversial Topics (Center for Research on Teaching and Learning)
- Immigrant Student Success: A Free Online Workshop (The Immigrant Learning Center)
- Sample Lesson Plan: Public Charge Changes (Immigrants Rising)
- Re-imagining Migration: Resource Collection for Educators (UCLA)
- The Waiting Game: Online Game About Seeking Asylum in the U.S. (ProPublica and WYNC, via Re-imagining Migration)

Recommended videos

- Talking About Big Topics with High School and ELL Immigrant Students (Anne Marie Foerster Luu, ESOL Teacher – Maryland)
- Making Connections to Students' Lives in the Classroom (Lori Dodson, ESOL Teacher – Maryland)

Teach empathy and appreciation

Why this matters

Empathy can help build community and a culture of respect in a classroom or school. A first step in developing empathy is to understand how issues affect an individual personally – this can be a powerful exercise for staff and students alike. Given that empathy is considered one of the most critical 21st-century skills for students to learn, these exercises can have long-lasting impacts for students. See more about that topic from KQED.

Tips for getting started

- Find out what social-emotional resources your school or district has available.
- Identify your goals for developing empathy, including relevant topics for your classroom, school community, or colleagues.
- Review the following resources to find the activities that best fit your setting.
- Consider collaborating with colleagues, even informally, to find ways to extend your efforts to more students and staff.

Activity idea

If only you knew me: In a series of *Education Week* blog posts edited by Larry Ferlazzo on how to teach controversial topics, teacher Paul Barnwell describes an activity in which students write three things about themselves that classmates do not know. As the teacher then reads them anonymously to the class, the students begin to get an idea of the "range of intense experiences and perspectives (the) classroom community contains."

Expressing appreciation

Giving students the chance to express appreciation for others is another way to create community and develop empathy. It allows students to identify positive traits and behaviors in each other, build self-esteem, and highlight student qualities that teachers might overlook. Students can express appreciation for peers, teachers, and staff with activities such as:

- **Appreciation mailbox:** Each student creates an envelope, folder, or "mailbox" in which classmates can leave an anonymous note of appreciation, such as, "He is a good soccer player," or "She picked up something I dropped." The point is to find something positive for each person in the class. This can be an ongoing exercise or a special activity.

- **Appreciate station:** This is a more public version of the above activity where students post thank you notes publicly for classmates, teachers, or staff in the building. This blog post shares ideas for getting started.
- **This helped my learning:** Teacher David Olio regularly gives his students note cards and asks them to write down a way in which a classmate helped their learning. This highlights students' contributions for him and the class – and offers some opportunities for informal assessment as well.

Recommended resources

Edutopia

- The Power of Empathy
- 4 Proven Strategies for Teaching Empathy

Teaching Tolerance

- Understanding Empathy: Lesson Plan for Grade 3-5
- Developing Empathy: Lesson Plan for Grades 6-8
- Boosting Empathy with Five Simple Words
- Empathy: The Antidote to Bullying

More classroom resources

- Roots of Empathy classroom project
- Random Acts of Kindness Lesson Plans (Random Acts of Kindness Foundation)
- Books That Teach Empathy (Common Sense Media)
- Why Empathy Matters in Classroom Storytelling (Re-imagining Migration)

Related strategies from this guide

- Sharing personal stories
- Using books in the classroom and beyond
- Understanding the impact of immigration issues on students
- Developing empathy for English language learners

Recommended videos

- 3 Videos on the Importance of Empathy (Edutopia)

Pay attention to what students do – and do not – say about immigration

Why this matters

Immigrant students, including young children, regularly navigate decisions about what to say in conversations about immigration or related topics throughout the school day. There is now more research focusing on this topic, including on the significance of students' silence with respect to immigration issues and status.

Case study: Celebrating diversity

In her research based on extensive classroom observations of peer discussions at an elementary school in Brooklyn, Dr. Ariana Mangual Figueroa (2017) notes a range of circumstances that can impact what students will or will not share about themselves, including:

- the nature of the activity and how it is framed
- whether personal questions are asked, and if so, which ones
- the experiences and immigration status of students and their family members.

Dr. Mangual Figueroa observed a variety of classroom activities at the school; one situation she highlights took place in a social-emotional learning class about bullying. In an effort to increase understanding about students' diversity, the teacher had planned an activity in which students would stand when their country of origin was called.

However, she had not taken into account that some of the students were not born in the U.S.; after some initial confusion, she asked everyone "not born here" to stand. Dr. Mangual Figueroa noted that an undocumented student in the class, Lupe, remained seated through the exercise and mumbled that she would not stand up. Dr. Mangual Figueroa writes,

> *The way this exercise — intended to foster inclusion — in fact alienated certain students is revealing. Educators may assume that students will feel comfortable talking about their identity during activities meant to elicit multicultural perspectives designed to honor their culture and experiences in school. By creating a situation in which students would have to publically identify with a home country that might then raise questions about nationality and citizenship, (the teacher) inadvertently turned the activity from one of celebrating diversity into one that generated student fear of revealing their differences in legal status.*

This does not suggest that activities celebrating diversity and students' cultures are out of place. Instead, it may be worth it to examine the activities, determine whether they might put students on the spot, and try reframing them. Dr. Mangual Figueroa encourages teachers to:

- give students an opportunity to engage with "relevant social issues" (p. 515) with which they could identify
- allow students to choose topics of interest without putting them in a position where they have to describe their own experiences or disclose immigration/citizenship status
- pay attention to students' silence by tuning in to both "'audible' silences that stop classroom conversation as well as those 'inaudible silences that indicate a strategic refusal to participate'" (p. 516).

Note: You may find some helpful ideas in our resource section on adapting assignments about family history and genealogy to include diverse families and students who are adopted.

Case study: Talking about campaign rhetoric

In a separate study (2018), Dr. Sandra L. Osorio shares the approach that she and a teacher in a dual-language second-grade classroom used to respond to a classroom discussion about immigration rhetoric during the 2016 election. Dr. Osorio and her co-teacher decided to create a lesson centered on culturally sustaining pedagogy and used the picture book *From North to South/Del norte al sur* by René Colato Laínez. They found that their students had deep funds of knowledge about immigration, citizenship, and family separation; by talking about immigration explicitly, the teachers created a supportive environment in which students could discuss their concerns and experiences in the midst of much uncertainty.

In addition to integrating art and civic action into the classroom, Dr. Osorio also recommends the following:

> *What every teacher can do is position him- or herself as a learner and welcome students' funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) into the classroom. Teachers must be willing to create opportunities for students to share their lived experiences. Some additional ways that Natalia and I did this in our classroom were by including multicultural children's literature, inviting families into the classroom, having a Latinx author visit the classroom, and taking up topics students brought into the classroom (e.g., La Llorona, or the Weeping Woman, Mayan legends, and immigration).*

A decision to "shatter the silence"

For a personal take on living in the shadows as undocumented students, read this interview with twin sisters Brizzia and Maria Muñoz Robles, who are both students at Notre Dame. They were the first twin valedictorians of their high school and are DACA recipients who talk about what it was like to hide their undocumented status throughout all of their schooling, until a conversation with the former president of Notre Dame gave them the courage to share their story.

Related research and resources

If you would like to explore more of the discussion around this topic, take a look at the following. Some of these reports may require a subscription to download.

- Dilemmas in Classrooms and Schools: Silence (Re-imagining Migration)
- *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child* by Cristina Igoa
- *The Art of the Reveal: Undocumented High School Students, Institutional Agents, and the Disclosure of Legal Status* by Marco A. Murillo
- *On the Grammar of Silence: The Structure of My Undocumented Immigrant Writer's Block* by Alberto Ledesma
- *Inhabited Silence in Qualitative Research: Putting Poststructural Theory to Work* by Lisa A. Mazzei

Tips for getting started

In addition to the recommendations from these researchers, Dr. Emily Crawford-Rossi, a researcher at the University of Missouri studying this issue, recommends looking for opportunities to:

- build empathy and kindness
- use diverse children's literature to talk about struggles with belonging and identity (such as the forthcoming title *Where Are You From?* by Yamile Saied Méndez)
- challenge immigration myths using resources such as Teaching Tolerance's Ten Myths About Immigration and the related lesson plan.

Recommended videos

- Helping Dreamers Tell Their Stories (Anne Marie Foerster Luu, ESOL Teacher – Maryland)

Use books in the classroom and beyond

Why this matters

Books can be a powerful doorway into a topic that is complex and highly personal. They can serve as mirrors for students who see their experiences reflected and validated; they can also serve as windows for other students (and adults) who gain a new perspective, some background knowledge, and perhaps a new level of empathy as well.

As Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop, who created the "windows and mirrors" metaphor, says, "When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience."

Tips for getting started

- Look for books related to your students' experiences and cultures. Ask colleagues for their input on cultural authenticity.
- Look for books that focus on immigration stories.
- Include the books you find in:
    - classroom libraries
    - in school libraries
    - in reading rooms, parent resource rooms
    - other places where families will be able to share them together.
- Look for ways to include the books as a part of a class unit or classroom read-aloud.
- Keep in mind that picture books can be great resources for older students and adults as well, particularly when addressing a complex topic.

Recommended resources

Colorín Colorado has compiled the following resources:

- Immigration Booklists for Kids and Young Adults
- Multicultural Booklists by Topic for Kids and Adults
- Professional Booklists for Educators
- Culturally Relevant Books in the ELL Classroom

Immigration book packs

Rachel Lerner, a social worker in Massachusetts, started putting together immigration book packs and donating them to libraries and other neighborhood locations as a way to give all families an entry into conversations about immigration. Her titles included:

- *Lost and Found Cat* by Doug Kuntz and Amy Shrodes
- *Stepping Stones* by Magriet Ruurs
- *Mama's Nightingale* by Edwidge Danticat
- *The Journey* by Francesca Sanna
- *I'm New Here* by Anne Sibley O'Brien
- *We Came to America* by Faith Ringgold

Recommended video

This video from *The Guardian* tells the incredible story of Kunkush, the cat featured in *Lost and Found Cat*.

Learn how your families approach social-emotional health

Why this matters

The notion of "mental health" and how to address different challenges or topics can vary widely across cultures. Collaboration among cultural liaisons, ESL/bilingual staff, school psychologists, and families is critical for meeting students' needs in this area. In addition, families have numerous strengths and coping strategies that can be harnessed in supportive settings.

Tips for getting started

Social worker Laura Gardner encourages schools to engage with families and talk about:

- what has helped the family overcome difficult situations in the past
- what the family sees as its strengths, and as their children's strengths
- their own coping strategies
- how difficult situations are addressed in their culture
- how the school/program might make members of a particular community feel welcome or supported
- how to rebuild their extended family systems/informal community networks
- what kinds of information or support the family may want.

Recommended resources

- Social and Emotional Support for Refugee Families: A School Psychology Perspective (Colorín Colorado)
- Helping Immigrant and Refugee Students Succeed: It's Not Just What Happens in the Classroom (Center for Health and Health Care in Schools)
- Culture and Trauma (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
- Refugee Trauma (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
- Culturally-Sensitive Trauma-Informed Care (Health Care Toolbox)

Recommended videos

- One Principal's Journey to a Refugee Camp (Dr. Cynthia Lundgren, WIDA)