



**LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO'S SCHOOL OF LAW  
CENTER FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

# **SUPPORTING NEWCOMER STUDENTS: A CHICAGO-SPECIFIC EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVES**

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Youth at the Crossroads of Family,  
Community, State and Society:  
Children's Rights and Connections in the  
Changing Contexts of Family, Culture,  
and Society



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# OVERVIEW

1. Introduction of Issue
2. Newcomer Students: An Overview
3. Policies Related to Social and Emotional Learning
  - a) Mental health access
  - b) Bilingual education programs
  - c) Multicultural considerations
4. Conclusions and Recommendations

# INTRODUCTION: CHICAGO AND NEWCOMERS

- Immigrants represent close to **21%** of Chicago's population
- Chicago signed the Welcoming City Ordinance in **2006** making Chicago a sanctuary city
  - Provides protections for undocumented immigrants from federal immigration enforcement
- Chicago adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in **2009**
- In **2017**, Illinois Governor signs the Illinois TRUST Act in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood, community with the highest number of undocumented residents in the City
  - Limits the state and local law enforcement from enforcing federal immigration laws
  - Seeks to build trust between undocumented immigrant communities and local law enforcement



# **INTRODUCTION: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND NEWCOMERS**

- Chicago Public Schools (CPS) leadership sends frequent open letters to CPS families addressing changes to immigration law and enforcement
- CPS affirms itself as a welcoming district free from interference from federal immigration laws
- CPS publicly supports the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and provides resources for undocumented families navigating the college application process

# OVERARCHING QUESTION

Given the city's notable policy initiatives, how does Chicago and its schools implement these policies into actions to best support its newcomer students?

# NEWCOMER STUDENTS

- Refers to any foreign-born student who migrated to the US:
  - Asylees
  - Refugees
  - Unaccompanied minors
  - Etc.
- Newcomers are not homogenous – they come from different cultures and backgrounds
  - Varying levels of English language proficiency
  - Racial/ethnic backgrounds
  - Different cultural norms
- Consequently, all newcomer students have different needs

# NEWCOMER STUDENTS: CUI

- Children who are Unaccompanied Immigrants (CUI)
  - Children under 18 years of age
  - Migrated to US without primary caregiver or legal status
- Often categorized into two groups:
  - CUI apprehended and processed by US Department of Homeland Security
  - CUI who enter the US without detection
- From October 2013 to May 2018, **1518** CUI released to sponsors in Illinois
  - **969** released to sponsors in Cook County (Chicago area)
  - Data does not account for CUI who entered the US without detection

(U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018)

# NEWCOMER STUDENTS: CUI

- Present with tiered concerns
  - Mental health concerns
  - Trauma
  - Racial/ethnic discrimination
  - Limited English language proficiency
  - Familial disruptions
  - Barriers to educational access
- May need additional psychosocial and educational resources at school

(Oppedal & Idsoe, 2012; Fordham University School of Law & Vera Institute of Justice, 2015; Durán, 2008; Gunderson, 2007; Pine & Drachman, 2005; Vidal de Haymes, Avrushin, & Coleman, 2018)



# LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR NEWCOMERS

- Civil Rights Act of 1964 – Titles IV and VI
  - “All children, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, and nationality, are entitled to free educational services and are protected from discrimination from federal funds and in public schools”
- Illinois State Constitution
  - All children who reside in Illinois are provided high quality education and services
- Plyler v. Doe (1982)
  - All children, including those without legal citizenship, are entitled to equal protections and educational access

# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- Research shows that improving social and emotional functioning leads to increased:
  - Interpersonal strengths
  - Prosocial behaviors
  - Cultural sensitivity
  - School connection
  - Academic outcomes
  - Mental health outcomes

(Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011)

# CPS POLICY ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- For a total of **371,182** students in the district:
  - **319** school social workers
    - Ratio **1 : 1,200**
    - Recommended **1 : 250**
  - **729** full-time counselors; **6** part-time counselors for the
    - Ratio **1 : 505**
    - Recommended **1 : 250**
  - **232** school psychologists
    - Ratio of **1 : 1,1600**
    - Recommended **1 : 500-600**
  - **23** social and emotional learning specialists
    - Collaborate with 5-10 schools on SEL service delivery

# **CPS POLICY ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

- Students are eligible for language services if:
  - Language other than English is spoken at home
  - The student speaks a language other than English
- 18% of CPS students are bilingual

# RESEARCH ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION

- Dual language education programs are optimal
  - Don't prioritize English (or any mainstream language) over other languages
  - Invites all students to participate – not just English learners
  - Promote cultural awareness, enculturation, and academic achievement
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
  - Comprised of non-native English speakers
  - Graduates retrospectively report feeling isolated and removed from mainstream students
  - Some students report multicultural insensitivity, bullying, and social exclusion
- Newcomer programs
  - Specialized academic environments to serve newcomer English learners as they transition into typical language support program

(Vera et al., 2018; Duff, 2001; Alanis & Rodriguez, 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2003; Short, 2002, Short & Boyson, 2012, Koch, Gin, & Knutson)



# BILINGUAL EDUCATION

- Only 20 of 650 CPS schools practice dual language immersion programs
- ESL programs are more common
- Sullivan High School in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood is CPS's first newcomer program
  - 45% of students are newcomers from 38 different countries

# CPS POLICY ON MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND DIVERSITY

- Important to acknowledge the historical context of systemic oppression in the distribution of services for minoritized students
- School systems remain microcosms of social ills such as racism, xenophobia, biased cultural values such as assimilation over enculturation
- School personnel must be proactive in ways to promote inclusion for newcomers
  - Staff and cultural sensitivity trainings
  - Hiring bilingual staff
  - Involving the parents and caregivers of newcomers
  - Cultural enrichment programs

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Acknowledge that newcomer students are not homogenous and have different cultural, individual, and migratory experiences that will impact the type and level of need
- SEL initiatives should involve systemic preparation that include the entire school community (staff, instructors, students, parents, neighborhood etc.)
- School districts may benefit from hiring more mental health professionals and SEL specialists to train staff on relevant wellness concerns for newcomers

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Schools should consider bilingual education service delivery models that offer opportunities for both English learners and mainstream students to interact
- School personnel should acknowledge the role of systemic oppression when educating their community on topics pertaining to newcomer students
- School personnel may benefit from researching successful intervention programs that were culturally responsive

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# THANK YOU!

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