SUCCESS WITH MULTICULTURAL & NEWCOMERS ENGLISH LEARNERS
Proven Practices for School Leadership Teams

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Your school is experiencing a large influx of students new to the United States, and you know that more arrive in the country every day. If it hasn’t already affected your school, it soon will. Schools nationwide are experiencing an increase in Newcomers and other English Learners (ELs). Are you ready for them? Most of them have limited English language skills. You and your staff wonder how best to meet their language and academic needs. Your school also has ELs who are much more advanced in their English and content learning. Should the Newcomers receive instruction in the same classrooms as the advanced ELs and the other students? Should the Newcomers have separate classroom interventions? Is a Newcomer Center needed? Does your school have enough credentialed teachers to serve the Newcomers? Are all your teachers and administrators prepared for the increase in Newcomers? What kind of professional development do you need?

We were asked to write this book as so many schools are experiencing an influx of Newcomers. As we have worked with school districts throughout the country, we’ve been asked the same questions: What do we do? How do we get started? How do we know if what we are doing is working?

This book is a road map for leadership teams that need to answer these questions. We hope teams of administrators, coaches, teacher leaders, and assessment specialists use our recommendations to begin to answer these questions, and those that you may
have, by mapping out plans. The recommendations offered come from years of working with, listening to, and coaching administrators, coaches, and teachers from New York to Kauai. We’ve coached thousands of teachers in their classrooms as they implement the strategies outlined and we have combined our notes and their experiences in this book. The recommendations herein have been refined by Margarita Espino Calderón, an expert auditor for civil rights, based on her observations and documentation for various research projects, and further honed by Shawn Slakk’s classroom, leadership, state agency, and professional development delivery experience. Additionally, practical ideas come from Margarita and Shawn’s visits to Newcomer Centers throughout the country.

The Organization of This Book

We begin with details about a Newcomer’s educational background as a foundation for expediting an individual student’s learning. Getting to know the student is pivotal. With basic information in hand, the processes for formal identification, assessment, and placement in an instructional program can begin (as outlined in Chapter 2). While the academic aspects are being determined, another important learning aspect is being appraised—the socioemotional (discussed in Chapter 3). Socioemotional well-being, or lack thereof, can be the make it or break it factor in the Newcomer’s productive school and life experiences.

As Newcomers and ELs are now in almost every classroom, it is incumbent on the school’s entire staff to become involved in the effort to teach and care for them and to participate in professional development programs designed specifically to train staff to meet the diverse needs of Newcomers while serving all students. The research and effective practices described in Chapters 4 and 5 provide guidelines for the design of such programs. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 detail the implementation of strategies for teaching vocabulary and discourse, reading comprehension, and writing, respectively.

Professional Development Program: Key Components

The main components and purpose of the professional development program aimed at training staff to meet the needs of Newcomer and ELs (as illustrated in Figure 1.1) are:

- Identifying your students
- Identifying your qualified teachers and staff
- Developing a programmatic structure of service
- Accelerating ELs’ language, literacy, and knowledge base
- Supporting Newcomers’ socioemotional well-being
- Designing, implementing, and sustaining professional development for all staff

**FIGURE 1.1 Key Components of Professional Development Program**
We will address each of these items to help you develop your plan. If you already have a plan or a program, when you meet in collegial teams, you can review to identify gaps, progresses, and successes.

We offer evidence-based, effective instructional practices in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

For years, it was thought that Newcomers had to wait to start reading and writing. It is our contention that this myth has delayed students and is the primary reason why there are so many long-term ELs. Our research and practice indicate that with certain systematic instructional strategies, coupled with socioemotional approaches, Newcomers can excel.

Who Are Your Newcomers?

Do you know who your Newcomers are and where they come from? Culturally responsive teaching begins by knowing your students’ histories, cultures, experiences, and canons. The more we know about each student, the better we can build on their strengths and scaffold success in rigorous core-content curricula (LeMoine & Soto, 2017). After you discuss the following with your registrar or intake center personnel, you can use the chart shown in Figure 1.2 to map out the educational experiences and needs of your Newcomers.

Classification of Newcomers and Other ELs

- **Refugees.** These students are from places made inhospitable by severe violence and war. Refugee parents can apply for U.S. permanent resident status after one year from legal entry and then may request U.S. citizenship after five years. When refugees arrive, they are placed near private resettlement agencies that assist them with housing and job placement.
- **Non-Refugee Newcomers.** These are students from, for example, Mexico, India, China, and Cuba, as well as well as students displaced by natural disasters (who are ineligible for refugee status). They may not possess the U.S. residency permits necessary for them to receive governmental aid.
### FIGURE 1.2 2nd to 12th Grade Newcomers: Language and Literacy in First Languages Continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education</th>
<th>Highly Schooled EL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unschooled SLIFE</td>
<td>SIFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No schooling</td>
<td>Missing 2+ years of elementary or secondary level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New to print</td>
<td>Some L1 literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need alphabet, phonics, sound to letter concepts, concept of word, basal beginning word/vocabulary study, reading and orthographic/writing skills</td>
<td>Need advanced phonics, long/short vowels, syllables and affixes, concept of words in text, grammar and mechanics, vocabulary, basic reading and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need language for socioemotional expression and survival in school and community</td>
<td>Need language for socioemotional expression and survival in school and community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE**

*Students from Puerto Rico, though U.S. citizens, are sometimes classified as non-refugee Newcomers as, due to their educational system’s “Spanish as the official language” policy and newness to English, their English proficiency is limited.*

- **Highly Schooled Newcomers (HSN).** These students are children of government officials, professionals, and other highly schooled immigrants from all over the world, with the highest numbers from India. These students may speak great English but may need cultural and pronunciation assistance. Even those from countries where English is a national language—Liberia, South Africa, Singapore—might have gaps in dialect, reading comprehension skills that meet state standards, and cultural adaptation.