

# NATIONAL NEWCOMER NETWORK POLICY PLATFORM

Newcomer students sit in classrooms across the country. About 1 million immigrant students attend U.S. schools, and each of them contributes valuable knowledge to our communities as they grow, learn, and dream.

Many schools and districts that serve newcomers have taken great care to ensure welcoming communities and offer programming that elevates newcomers' strengths while still fulfilling their needs. Unfortunately, this approach isn't standard: a newcomer's experience can, and often does, differ from district to district. It's crucial for equity, and for newcomer's academic, linguistic, and social-emotional development, that we remedy these disparities.

In 2022, Next100 and Californians Together gathered educators, researchers, and advocates from across the country to advance systemic solutions for newcomer education. **Together, we formed the National Newcomer Network (NNN). We aim to provide a national space for people who care about newcomers to come together to push our education system to adequately support the real needs of newcomers everywhere.** Our collective work is rooted in the day-to-day experiences of students, educators, and community leaders on the ground. Alongside our students and communities, **we envision a safe and welcoming public education system where all newcomer students can succeed and thrive academically, socially, and emotionally in every classroom where they learn.**

As a coalition of over 100 members representing twenty-eight states, we have spent nearly a year developing a platform that will enable schools and communities to deliver a quality education for newcomer students. It includes specifications for

state and federal policy, and attends holistically to the many points of interaction that government can have with newcomers during their educational experiences.

Our platform is split into three priority sections: (1) upholding civil rights and providing adequate services; (2) guaranteeing effective educator preparation and training; and (3) improving funding and accountability systems for newcomers. The following policy recommendations were developed in working groups for each priority area and were finalized in collaboration with our entire membership.

In this unique moment when immigrant students are receiving increased media attention, schools have the opportunity to be a home where dreams are cultivated and nurtured for every child, newcomers included. This platform provides policymakers with a slate of actionable ideas to make public education more just, equitable, and effective for newcomers. The National Newcomer Network calls on policymakers to enact the following policies and practices to bring that vision to fruition.

## WHO ARE NEWCOMERS?

Newcomer students are a linguistically and culturally diverse group that encompasses recent immigrant youth, refugees, asylees, unaccompanied minors, migratory children, students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), and more. Newcomers have varying levels of English proficiency—not all are identified as English learners—and add a rich, diverse heritage of multilingualism and culture to the classroom, imparting unique knowledge that strengthens the learning environment for all students.



## OUR RECOMMENDATIONS



### UPHOLD CIVIL RIGHTS AND PROVIDE ADEQUATE SERVICES

- ✔ **Prioritize the provision of wrap-around services for newcomers through federal legislation and earmarks in state and local budgets.** These funds should create and/or strengthen newcomer case manager roles in districts in partnership with community-based organizations serving newly arrived students and families.
- ✔ **Target funding to develop and improve statewide intake processes for linguistically and culturally diverse students, provide technical assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) to implement that guidance, and to establish and adequately staff district welcome centers.** Prioritizing funding at the state level to ease enrollment policies will aid in safeguarding access to quality education for newcomer students from the moment they arrive.
- ✔ **Guarantee funding sources for schools to provide engaging, accessible, culturally and linguistically sustaining, and critically conscious instruction for recently immigrated youth** aligned with the needs and goals of this population.
- ✔ **Authorize funding for federal pilot programs** to develop and expand secondary-school instructional models for newcomer students and those with limited or interrupted formal education.
- ✔ **Foster accountability and transparency by bolstering federal funding to adequately support the Office for Civil Rights to follow through on complaints.** This funding should also be targeted to ensure LEAs provide linguistically accessible training for parents, guardians, and school staff to understand newcomer students' rights to language access and quality education and to file complaints when those rights are violated. These trainings can be executed in partnership with trusted community-based organizations.
- ✔ **Develop master contracts at the state level with providers of language access resources that allow districts and schools to benefit from lower prices negotiated on their behalf.** These contracts will ensure that schools can provide fundamental language access for families through adequate translation and interpretation services and culturally sustaining practices in schools. Intentional efforts to support immigrant communities' home languages allow all families to fully engage as partners in their children's education and build truly multilingual communities.



## GUARANTEE EFFECTIVE EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND TRAINING

- ✓ **Develop comprehensive programming guidelines within the Office of English Language Acquisition for school administrators on supporting newcomer students.** These guidelines should articulate newcomer students' education protections and provide comprehensive guidance on creating and monitoring equitable access to grade-level courses and content, language acquisition support programs, advanced academics, and other specialized program services as needed (such as Gifted and Talented, 504, and Special Education).
- ✓ **Develop targeted U.S. Department of Education training on all aspects of newcomer student support.** The training should differentiate by educator roles, include key data on newcomer students, provide a basic overview of our immigration system, outline the key education protections for newcomers, and present research-validated practices that educators can use to create a sense of belonging for newcomer students in their classrooms and provide language acquisition support for newcomers as applicable.
- ✓ **Ensure funding is targeted towards the implementation of pre- and in-service teacher training to support newcomer students and those with limited or interrupted formal education** through federal, state, and local grant programs and initiatives aiming to grow teacher training pipelines and increase the diversity of the teaching and administrative workforce.
- ✓ **Require the U.S. Department of Education to monitor implementation and improve accountability of programs and educator training for serving newcomer students** by collecting national data on states' successes and challenges in implementing the Educator Training on Supporting Newcomer Students discussed above and programs such as Title III, as well as coordinating with the Office of Civil Rights and the Department of Justice to support with filing complaints about violations of newcomer students' rights in schools.



## TRANSFORM FUNDING AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS FOR NEWCOMERS

- ✓ **Amend federal and state funding formulae for multilingual learners** to provide new, additional funding that targets specific support to higher-need student populations, such as students with limited or interrupted formal education.
- ✓ **Appropriate federal funds to assist states in incorporating disaggregated data into K-12 and P-20 data systems.** Currently, districts and states are not required to disaggregate and publish data on Title III immigrant students along gender, race, ethnicity, home language, or other performance or behavior metrics. This data will provide more detailed information on Title III immigrant students and allow for the adequate provision of resources and programming to meet their needs.
- ✓ **Convene a working group led by the Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) to consider revision of the funding structure** for Title III immigrant subgrants. This group should include content experts, educators, immigrant advocates, and directly impacted individuals to contribute to a more sustainable, equitable, and representative funding structure for schools that support newcomer youth in the future.



**CALL TO ACTION!** Everyone has a role to play. Get involved in local initiatives and continue to elevate the importance of educational equity for newcomers in your community.

Want to connect and learn more about our work? Check out our website ([tcf.org/nnn](https://tcf.org/nnn)) or contact our co-founders Alejandra Vázquez Baur ([vazquezbaur@tcf.org](mailto:vazquezbaur@tcf.org)) and Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez ([xilonin@caltog.org](mailto:xilonin@caltog.org)).

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