

IDENTIFICATION OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

Introduction

Federal and State laws prohibit denying the enrollment of students in the public schools on the basis of immigration status. School districts are prohibited from requiring parents/students to disclose/document their immigration status; or making any inquiries of student /parents that may expose their undocumented status. In spite of the above laws, district must provide targeted educational services to immigrant students addressing their social, cultural and academic needs.

Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, section Title III-Immigrant, the term “immigrant children and youth” is defined as:

- individuals who are aged 3 through 21; and
- were not born in any state (“state” means the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico); and
- have not been attending one or more schools, in any one or more states, for more than three full academic years.

It is important to know that additional federal funding allocations are made to school districts when there is a yearly increase of immigrant students.

Immigrant Student Identification

The identification of immigrant students, as all English Learners (ELs), follows the same identification procedure. School districts will:

- Review students Home Language Survey.
- Conduct a family interview to determine if the student is potentially an EL student.
- Conduct a review of the student’s academic records from previous schooling, if available.
- Screen the student for English proficiency using the WIDA Model ID assessment.
- Determine the most appropriate English as a Second Language (ESL) or Bilingual Education program, based on the student’s overall language proficiency, in both English and the student native language.
- Provide parent with a detailed program description, from identification to placement, in the language they understand (home language). During this initial meeting, the parent has the right to waive placement in a specialized ESL or Bilingual Education program (*signed Waiver Form required*).

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Providing School and Classroom Support Regarding Immigrant Students

- Build supportive environments that respond to the immediate social, cultural, and linguistic needs of students.
- Increase sheltered instruction - English instruction that is modified so that subject matter is more comprehensible to students with limited vocabularies.
- Teach students learning strategies that they can use daily in all content areas (how to recognize cognates, looking for the heading of a chapter in pre-reading exercises, using a dictionary, or how to take effective notes, etc.).
- Recognize and encourage students' prior knowledge in the classroom.
- Use community resources to support immigrant students' acculturation process.
- Provide a print rich environment in both English and student's native language.
- Engage students in hands-on-learning, so students are physically involved.
- Be mindful of the new vocabulary ELs are exposed to in order not to overwhelm them.
- When assessing understanding, be open-minded. Provide multiple opportunities to demonstrate understanding (instead of writing: point, explain, act out, discuss, defend, draw, compare, predict, etc.).
- Allow students to work in cooperative groups in order to learn from each other.
- Keep high, but realistic, expectations throughout the year.

Reference:

- <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf>
- <http://www.nj.gov/education/bilingual/policy/immenrol.htm>
- <http://www.state.nj.us/education/bilingual/resources/newcomer.htm>
- <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/27483/>