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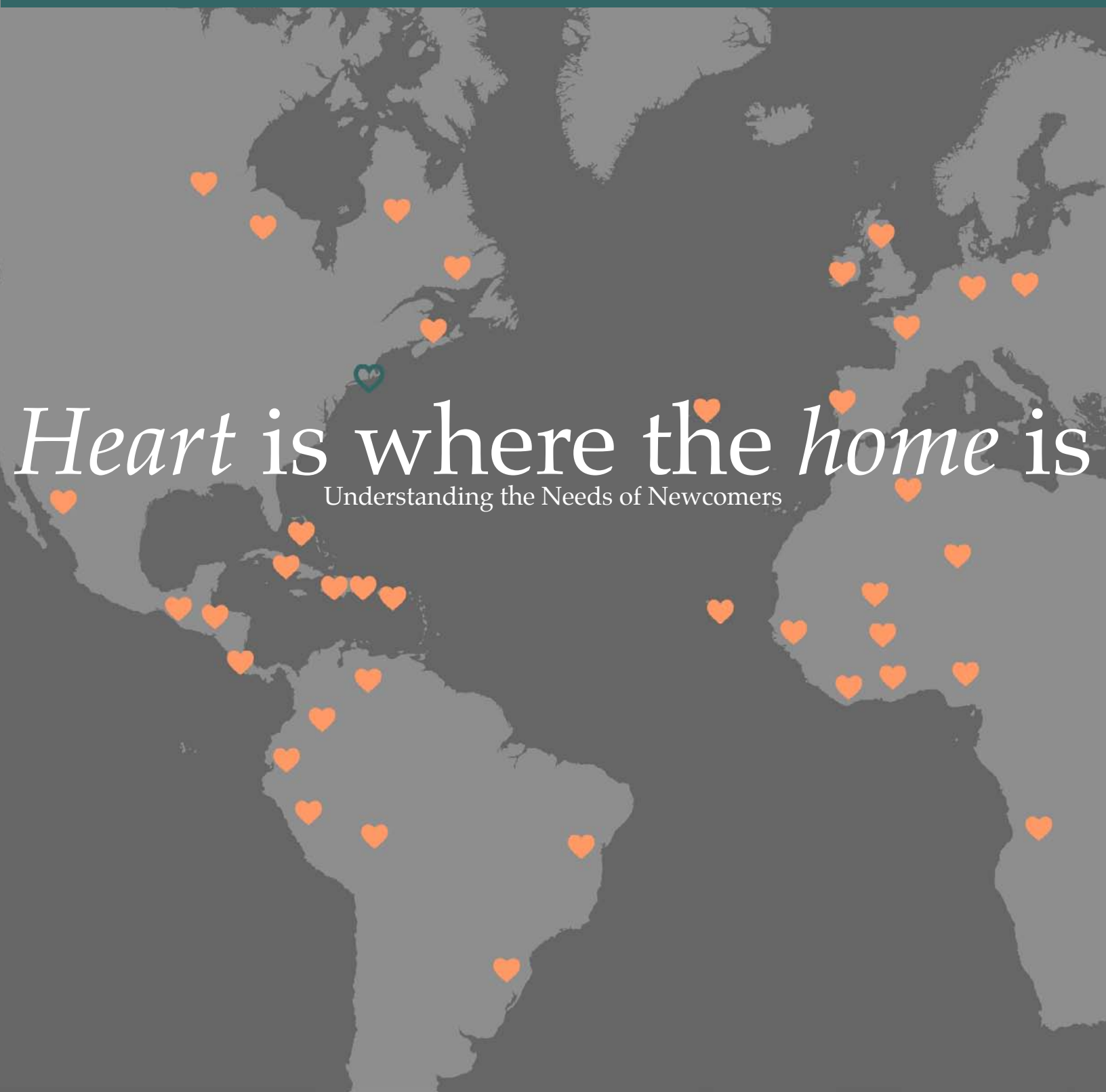

Heart is where the *home* is

Understanding the Needs of Newcomers

Fall 2018

CONTENTS

3 **News & Notes**

4 **Photos from Spring 2018 Conference**

5 **Pathways to Participation: Creating Communities that Tend to the Needs of Newcomers** Annie Smith

9 **Programming for Newcomers** Annie Smith

12 **Strategies for Easing Transition Shock** Louise El Yaafouri

14 **Gallery Walk 2018**

15 **Bridging Worlds in Words and Art: The Language Journey of Ana Flores** Doug Noriris

18 **Questions** Doug Noriris

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Louise works closely with global and local refugee resettlement entities and consults with schools and other organizations around healthy newcomer integration. She delivers keynotes and leads professional development sessions in the U.S. and internationally.

Louise has contributed to various publications and is the author of two books: The Newcomer Student: An Educator's Guide to Aid Transition (Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016) and The Newcomer Fieldbook: A Workbook Companion to The Newcomer Student (Sidon Press, 2017). Bio taken from Edutopia.org

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LAURA FARIA-TANCINCO is a member of the RITELL Coordinating Council and has taught Adult Ed ESL in universities & institutions all over RI. She has been in the ESL field for 10+ years. She began her ESL journey in 2006, after a degree and professional attempt in Graphic Design left her wanting more. She moved to Quito, Ecuador where she lived and worked for 2.5 years before backpacking around South America. Upon her return, she began adjuncting at colleges and universities around RI. She completed her M. Ed in TESL from RIC in 2015 and is currently the Coordinator of the ESL Intensive Program and Project ExCEL at RIC. She always says, the best people in the world arrive in her classroom. She enjoys all the challenges & rewards that come with the profession.

NEWS & NOTES

Recognition

Former RITELL Board Member Becomes RI Ambassador

Jane George, RITELL member, former RITELL Coordinating Council member and an itinerant ESL teacher for the North Kingstown School Department, was one of 22 PrepareRI Ambassadors selected by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) for the 2018-2019 school year. According to a RIDE press release, the group of classroom educators, district administrators and community leaders will spend the next year helping to expand career education opportunities as part of Prepare Rhode Island, a statewide strategy to prepare all Rhode Island youth for good jobs.

RIDE launched the program last year with five Ambassadors, who embarked on ambitious projects to help schools and colleges build career pathways. Projects included an interactive map of statewide internship opportunities, and a writing curriculum for school counselors.

Ambassadors will receive a $5,000 stipend for their participation, funded by New Skills for Youth, a grant from JPMorgan Chase and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSO). Rhode Island was one of only 10 states to receive New Skills for Youth funding for youth career readiness, and subsequently launched Prepare Rhode Island in January 2017.

Spring 2018

2018 RITELL Spring Conference

The 2018 RITELL Spring Conference took place on May 5 at Rhode Island College. Presenters Suzanna McNamara and Annie Smith, co-founders of Bridges to Academic Success with Dr. Elaine Klein, delivered the keynote address, "Getting to Know the Newcomers We Serve." They also presented a breakout session for Secondary School teachers titled "Supporting Newcomers to Build Academic Thinking, Language & Literacy Through Content."

Karen Mangone, an ELL teacher (K-5) at Whiteknact Elementary School in East Providence, R.I., gave a breakout presentation for Elementary School teachers on "Practical Ideas, Resources, and Activities for Teaching Newcomers."

Sabine Adrian, ESOL Program Coordinator at the R.I. Institute for Labor Studies and Research, led a panel discussion for Young Adult/Adult Education teachers on "Community Support for Newcomers: Resources and Testimonials." Panelists included students who were or are newcomers to Rhode Island, among them Knight Jean Yves Muhingabo, Diana Canales and Catarina Lorenzo.

RITELL SIG leaders were also honored for their work in volunteering and organizing meetings for the organization's special interest groups. Barbara Gourlay, co-chair of the Adult Educator SIG and Carolina Bisio, outgoing co-chair of the International Voices SIG, were on hand to receive their awards.

STAY CONNECTED

Don't forget to visit www.RITELL.org for teacher resources, conference information and much much more!

Spring 2019

RITELL Members Elect Coordinating Council Officers

In Spring 2019, RITELL membership will be voting for new officers to serve on the RITELL Coordinating Council. For more information about nominations, elections and officer responsibilities, visit: www.ritell.org, "About Us".

Welcoming and Supporting Newcomers in Our Classrooms.

Photo Credits: Mitchell Sanders

Presenters

Annie Smith

Suzanna McNamara

Karen Mangone

Catarina Lorenzo, Diana Canales and Sabine Adrian

Acknowledging SIG Leaders

Carolina Bisio

Barbara Gourlay

Conference Candids

Pathways to Participation: Creating Communities that Tend to the Needs of Newcomers

Annie Smith

ONE in every eight Rhode Islanders is an immigrant who has left almost everything they know behind. For them, a journey is not so easily measured in distance; it is far greater than the 5,000 miles they may have travelled and each of those 140,000 children who become students in Rhode Island classrooms has a story, an identity, a frame of reference that informs how they see and make sense of the world. A closer look at students' experiences is helpful to understanding the dimension of their lives; the complicated process of migration and resettlement. As harrowing as many students' experiences may be, they are resilient and resourceful. So often eager to embrace the possibility of the new, their own shifting and becoming, they are courageous and bring rich resources. They are never just students; they bring their histories. When they enter the school system, their recent arrival in the U.S. and unfamiliarity with English classify them as newcomers.

> *They are never just students; they bring their histories.*

Our work is to provide the pathways that buoy that courage; that support the risks newcomers take and reward them with opportunities to know themselves in ways that are expansive. Teachers who have welcomed these students into their fold year after year are a special breed. They have gained an expert's understanding of the ways learning is seeded and nurtured in the safety of community. They understand that teaching newcomers goes far beyond a curriculum. It is not a job, it is a vocation, a calling, and it is characterized by teachers who stay late, care beyond measure, who innovate and inspire, whose work is never left at the classroom door. Just as newcomers are never just students, teachers of newcomers are never just educators.

> *It is not a job, it is a vocation, a calling, and it is characterized by teachers who stay late, care beyond measure…*

These teachers are so often the pioneers. They forge forward galvanized by an internal understanding about what is right and equitable and human. It is a teacher like Mandy Manning, a newcomer teacher in Spokane, Wash., who received the NEA Teacher of the Year Award in 2018, who lends us insight into what constitutes strong programming for newcomers. The work that Mandy does exemplifies the quality learning opportunities, individualized attention and wrap-around support that diverse newcomers need to thrive and participate in their communities.

We need to design school structures and programming where there are members of the school staff and community stakeholders that take on the roles that so often fall to dedicated and impassioned teachers like Mary. These are the roles of the anthropologists, social workers, linguists, cultural brokers, advocates and pioneers. Addressing the multifaceted needs of diverse populations of newcomers takes forethought and strategic planning by school leaders able to galvanize stakeholders around a vision. Then, we must enact that vision through shared responsibility for developing the systems and structures and training that will carry the vision forward.

It cannot fall on the shoulders of one dedicated, charismatic teacher – bless her!

Most U.S. districts and schools have developed systems to assess students' English language proficiency and have built programs that target students' English language development. Policy for ELLs has focused on this. This often singular focus leads to a very narrow understanding of our newcomers. All students with Entering proficiency levels are not alike. Although many of the students we meet in our classrooms may be broadly classified as newcomers, they come to us with vastly different experiences. Understanding students - developing an awareness of where they have come from, what they care about and the challenges they have to face - will make us better at developing programs that are supportive and responsive to their needs.

Newly arrived immigrants are among the most vulnerable group of students and the first step to addressing their needs is to gain a holistic understanding of the stressors they may face. The Newcomer Toolkit, a report produced by the U.S. Department of Education and the National Center for English Language Acquisition in 2016, identifies the key stressors that may contribute to a child's ability to acculturate to their new circumstance and participate meaningfully in classrooms.

We are accustomed to looking at newcomers first through the lens of language, a linguistic lens, their English proficiency level. As Mary Manning and her colleagues will tell us, this is only one factor that can help us target their needs and inform their success in their new environment. The pieces of this pie highlight the aspects of a child that represent their well-being. School programs must tend to each of these aspects of the student through a comprehensive program.

What this chart above makes clear is that tending to the needs of newcomers must go far beyond language acquisition. Human beings are holistic and stressors in one area can have a significant impact on one's ability to participate and thrive in other areas. Though the primary work of schools is to educate, programs for newcomers must take into account the whole student as they set up programming and attempt to systematically attend to the diverse and varied needs of newcomers that so many of our teachers attempt single-handedly.

Change comes first with understanding: programming that addresses the whole child will positively impact their growth and success in school and beyond. It must be followed by a vision that includes shared responsibility for developing the systems, structures and training that will carry the vision forward.

The remainder of this article will propose best practices for programming and highlight examples from schools and districts over the country who have been, like Mary, pioneers in this work. The criteria presented in the chart on pages 9-11 are designed to help school staff, administrators and teachers reflect, either individually or as group, on the qualities that can enhance the programming, instruction and environments that support newcomers to thrive.

1. Know your students: Intake and Assessment

A first step is a thoughtful and comprehensive intake and identification process designed to know the student with the objective of using the information to create programming that is responsive. Identification of ELLs has been tethered to English language proficiency for decades. Programming generally aligns to students' English proficiency in spite of what Cummins taught us as early as 1981 about transfer of literacy from home language. Newcomers may generally be new to English, but an understanding of their home language literacy can help us to target and refine instruction and programming that accelerates their pathway to participation. More recently policy has pushed to gain more information on a sub-category of ELLs called SIFE or Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE). These students, whose literacy is not commensurate with grade level expectations in the US, are also diverse. At a minimum SIFE have literacy in home language two years behind their peers, yet increasingly students arrive in secondary classrooms with literacy levels in home language that hovers around 4th grade and in some cases adolescents may have never held a pencil or written their name.

Innovators across the country have instruments to assess students aligned to the categories of well-being shared previously:

Home language literacy (Linguistic/Academic)
- NY State developed the Multi-lingual SIFE Screener which is an online screener for SIFE that assesses literacy and math proficiency in 16 student home languages
- Minnesota Department of Education has literacy screeners, on paper, available on their website which achieve the same purpose

Mental and physical health (Socio-Emotional)
Los Angeles Unified School District:
- integrates physical and mental health screening as part of intake and makes a psychiatric social worker

available to meet with student and families
- provides referrals to community resources including legal services and follows up with families 6 weeks later to ensure they contact referrals.
Fairfax County, VA:
- helps students that may have experienced trauma connect with counselors and social workers through a centralized Welcome Center.
BINcA, Boston MA:
- interviews each student and family in home language to build understanding of both personal and academic history
- staff tailors a comprehensive set of social, emotional and physical services to support student's well being

Culture and History (Familial/Cultural/Socio-Emotional)
Programs that take seriously the impact of building a community that is inclusive and safe hire parent co-ordinators and social workers who make sure that staff understand both the individual and group histories of students; for instance the Karen in Burma and Thailand, the Somali in Dadaab, gang violence in Central America and the emigration of unaccompanied minors. These stories, to be sure, are individual but they are part of a larger geo-political and social narrative. These understandings can inform both curriculum and wrap-around services. Community cultural organizations, as well as some internet sites, can provide the broad strokes of these stories and the social and political dynamics so that staff can find pathways to understanding students' individual narratives and connect their experience to the more abstract topics in ELA, Social Studies or Science.

2. Develop Common Values and Accept Shared Responsibility

Meeting the varied needs of newcomers, who are themselves diverse, is a complex proposition. It cannot happen without strategic planning that is anchored in shared beliefs and accomplished through shared responsibility and clear systems that themselves inculcate a shared vision. Further it requires a commitment to a regular process of reflection that cultivates continuous improvement.

The majority of states do not describe a specific course of study for ELLs, much less newcomers. However, it is useful to look at contexts where considered decisions have been made to transform what programming and learning environments for ELLs looks like.

NY State Department of Education:
- Revised regulations to increase ELL access to grade-level, credit-bearing courses even in their 1st year in U.S. school. Requires all Entering and Emerging ELLs to not only be programmed for Stand-alone ENL/ESL focused on language development but also Integrated ENL which focuses on content and language development simultaneously and counts towards credit in core content areas;
- Developed curriculum and a program model for adolescent SIFE with home language literacy at 3rd grade and below (SIFE with DEveloping Literacy).

Harris County Department of Education (Houston)
- Developed Newcomer Cohorts who attend all content classes together
- Specialists work with content teachers to help them learn effective scaffolding for ELLs

International Network for Public Schools (throughout USA)
- Anchored in 5 core principles that privilege heterogeneity so that students are not grouped by their language proficiency or literacy levels. Instruction integrates language and content anchored in performance tasks that promote experiential learning and collaboration. (Project-based.)

In general, best practice points to ensuring that all teachers are trained to be teachers of ELLs and towards ensuring that newcomers have equitable access to content-rich, credit-bearing courses, eschewing remedial, language-only and non-credit bearing courses.

These are examples of innovators, advocates and pioneers, districts and institutions who are pushing what it means to serve ELLs and are not content to settle for the status quo.

3. Foster Community by Design

Supportive environments for newcomers are grounded in an appreciation for the shock and disorientation students feel adjusting to a new culture, language and the demands of school. Further the environment is welcoming and affirming of the rich and varied cultures, languages and experiences students bring. It means creating a community, a place where people feel known and valued for both what they share and the differences they bring. The qualities that make a community sturdy and resilient are inculcated through structures and systems, not slogans. These approaches lead to bonds and relationships that foster mutual responsibility.

New World High School and Marble Hill (New York City)
- Teachers loop with a cohort of students to develop a community where teachers are responsible for and carry students through all four years
  - Teachers receive training and new teachers are given 2 -3 years to shadow and adjust

BINcA (Boston)
- Summer Bridge Program eases transition into school (4 days literacy, one day field trips)
- Newcomer students are matched with older student mentors of the same language/cultural background
- Shared knowledge of cultural backgrounds allows staff to mediate potential conflicts

International Community High School (New York City)
- Conflict resolution structures are used by school community to process disagreements and altercations.
  - Cultivates dialogue, direct or indirect, between offending parties and those they have harmed by their actions and avoids isolating.

Place Bridge Academy (Denver)

- Focus on the whole child (academic, health and psycho-social) integrated into all programs

4. Inclusive and Rigorous by Design

Although newcomers have distinct needs that include wrap-around services beyond academics, programming should be in service of instruction that simultaneously focuses on the development of content knowledge and language. This is true for both ELLs with grade-level literacy as well as SIFE with far lower levels of home language literacy or SPEd students. This includes leveraging home language as a resource to support and accelerate the acquisition of content knowledge.

International Community High School (New York City)
- Comprehensive school side services for SIFE across content and in vertical alignment throughout the high school. This includes Bridges to Academic Success in a sheltered model across content areas for SIFE with Developing literacy who have home language literacy at 3rd grade and below.

International Network for Public Schools (schools across the USA)
- Schools are structured to integrate language and content across the content areas regardless of students' language proficiency. All students benefit form the same project-based, rich academic instruction.

Pathways to Graduation (New York City, District 79)
- Provides high school equivalency program to over-aged newcomers in English or Spanish. As students make progress they can transfer to one of 91 satellite sites that offer unique programming.

5. Engage family and community stakeholders

Partnerships with community organizations, refugee and social services groups and religious organizations 'widen the net of knowledge' schools need to support newcomers. These institutions often have a rich understanding of the language, culture and circumstances of emigration and, therefore, can be uniquely positioned to augment services for students that can be crucial to both their transition to the US and their continued engagement in their education.

At Highland Elementary School (Maryland)
- Offers weekend soccer tournaments, computer and language classes for parents
- Resource for housing assistance and mental health counseling

It Takes a Village Academy (New York City)
- Parent coordinator acts as a liaison with families, which includes visiting students at home and connecting students and families to community services
- Program open houses at two different times of the day so that a larger number of family members can attend

Manhattan Bridges (New York City)
- Actively pursue opportunities through community partnerships:
- Cornell University Hydroponics Internship pays students to do hydroponics research with university professors
- College Now grants high school students access to college courses
- Riverside Community Center offers students one on one counseling
- iMentor matches students in 9th -11th grade with professional mentors and they meet monthly at sponsored events

St Luke's and Newcomers High School (New York City)
- Immigrant teens from Newcomers and teens from St. Luke's exchanged letters and met several times a year. St. Luke's students helped Newcomer students edit their immigration stories. In turn they developed papers based on immigration based on interviews with students at Newcomers.

Conclusion

Educating newcomers means not only supporting their access to language, but recognizing the distance between the cultures students have left, the literacies they bring and the culture and cultural practices they find here. This is not a job we can or should do alone - it is bigger than you or me or Mandy Manning. It means being an advocate and creating opportunities where we come together - to motivate, rouse, stir, learn and galvanize one another. Sometimes it means pressing on policy in order to offer pathways for diverse students that invite them to participate meaningfully. Our influence and our ideas are bigger and better together.

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CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKER (cont'd)

Programming for Newcomers[1]

Annie Smith

Criteria	Rationale	Examples
Intake and Assessment: Know your students	Immigrant newcomers are diverse and that diversity means that their needs are varied and challenge our school systems to respond to their complex academic and personal needs. Serving their needs effectively means developing intake and assessment structures that focus on students literacy in home language, English Language proficiency, but also their socio-emotional, mental health, legal and financial needs as these are stressors that inevitably impact on students' meaningful participation in school.[2]	**RIDE's Guidance** - Home language Survey - Family interview - Review of records and transcripts - English Language Proficiency (W-APT) - Home Language Literacy (limited decoding and encoding skills) **Beyond RIDE**[3] - Physical health and well being screening with referrals
Create a shared vision that is sustainable	Meeting the varied needs of newcomers, who are themselves diverse, is a complex proposition. It cannot happen without strategic planning that is anchored in shared beliefs and accomplished through shared responsibility and clear systems and that themselves inculcate the beliefs. Further it requires a commitment to a regular process of reflection that cultivates continuous improvement.	- Recognize that the entire school shares responsibility for students' success. - Maintain a strong sense of pride in and acceptance for all cultures. - Hold newcomer students to the same high standards as other students. - Set academic and social goals for students and build a program to meet them. - Define clear entry and exit criteria and share with students and measure progress. - Recruit, train and retain qualified teachers and staff. - Collect and analyze student data to drive continuous improvement. - Establish benchmarks and processes for student transition to mainstream programs or post secondary settings. - Allocate appropriate resources.

Criteria	Rationale	Examples
Foster Community by Design	Supportive environments for newcomers are grounded in an appreciation for the shock and disorientation students feel adjusting to a new culture, language and the demands of school. Further, the environment is welcoming and affirming of the rich and varied cultures, languages and experiences students bring.	- Determine the needs of students and their families and design and adapt program that meet those needs. - Linguistically diverse professional and paraprofessional staff; - Student support groups that address cultural transition and socio-emotional wellness; - Bilingual counselors knowledgeable about students' cultures and emigration circumstances; - Counselors are trained to support students with trauma. - Match newcomers with older mentors who share language and culture. - Offer a summer program that targets school readiness. - Staff are hired and trained to address not only students' academic growth, but also support their socio-emotional needs. - Looping builds community and allows teachers to follow students for several years. - Clubs that draw on and develop students' home language and culture;
Inclusive and Rigorous by Design	Although newcomers have distinct needs that include wrap-around services beyond academics, programming should be in service of instruction that simultaneously focuses on the development of content knowledge and language. This is true for both ELLs with grade level literacy as well as SIFE with far lower levels of home language literacy. This includes leveraging home language as a resource to support and accelerate the acquisition of content knowledge.	- Create or adopt a unified language development framework that integrates content, analytic practices,and language simultaneously. - Develop bilingual, dual language or two-way immersion programs to support access to content and language development simultaneously. - Promote cross-disciplinary, academic literacy practices and thematic units that build conceptual knowledge across content areas. *cont'd on next page*

Criteria	Rationale	Examples
Inclusive and Rigorous by Design *cont'd from previous page*		*cont'd from previous page* - Design courses, across content and NLA, that target the specific needs of SIFE and SPEd with an emphasis on content, language and academic thinking. - Promote the use of students' home languages as a resource to develop ideas and academic thinking.
Engage Family and Community Stakeholders	Partnerships with community organizations, refugee and social services groups and religious organizations 'widen the net of knowledge'[4] schools need to support newcomers. These institutions often have rich understanding of the language, culture and circumstances of emigration and therefore, can be uniquely positioned to augment services for students that can be crucial to both their transition to the US and their continued engagement in their education.[5]	- Hire community liaisons and parent coordinators with cultural and linguistic understanding of students. - Offer classes to parents. - Pursue partnerships with social, physical and mental health services on the campus. - Refer students and families to culturally responsive community health providers. - Plan support groups to address family reunification or other common socio-emotional needs.

1. SIFE Manual, NYSED (June 2018)
2. SIFE Manual, NYSED (June 2018)
3. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/ncomertoolkit.pdf
4. Spaulding, Carolino, & Kali-Ahset. Immigrant Students and Secondary School Reform: Compendium of Best Practices. Written on behalf of The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). 2004. http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/BestPractices.pdf
5. SIFE Manual, NYSED (June 2018)

Strategies for Easing Transition Shock

Louise El Yaafouri

English language learners in particular may be impacted by this form of stress, but simple strategies can help—and they benefit all students.

TRANSITION shock—an umbrella term that incorporates culture shock, chronic distress, traumatic upset, and post-traumatic stress disorder—can impact student success in a number of behavioral, emotional, and physiological ways. It can also impair students' ability to acquire and make sense of a language, meaning that it creates unique challenges for America's fastest-growing student population, English language learners (ELLs), especially those students who have come from areas experiencing war or large-scale resettlement.

Understanding transition shock begins with an awareness of stress. All children endure stress—it's a healthy, normal function. For some individuals, however, stress—originating from a singular traumatic event, a series of adverse experiences, or a period of prolonged anxiety—becomes acute, meaning that the state of stress lasts well after the inciting incident or incidents have ended.

> *Understanding transition shock begins with an awareness of stress.*

How Are My Students Affected?

Transition shock can negatively influence academic and social learning. This occurs when stress levels become so unhealthy that they trigger detectable behavioral, emotional, hormonal, and neurological changes. These shifts can disrupt a student's ability to effectively manage their stress and return to their typical emotional and behavioral state.

In the classroom, transition shock may produce a range of manifestations. Observable traits include symptoms of physical distress (such as tummy aches, headaches, or asthma), speech impediments, or compulsive behaviors. Strained peer relationships, concentration difficulties, self-regulation obstacles, and compromised executive functioning skills can be indicators of transition shock, too.

How Are ELLs in Particular Impacted?

Transition shock has the capacity to overwrite existing neural networks, essentially restructuring a young person's developing brain. In fact, it can alter the way the brain interprets and processes new information, which can deeply interfere with language development. This is true for two key reasons.

First, most transition shock is processed and retained within the brain stem, the hippocampus, and the amygdala—the body's "fight-or-flight" center. These are all subconscious, nonverbal parts of the brain. Experiences stored in these regions are not readily accessible on a conscious level, making them difficult to manage and overcome. Stress embedded in this way can interfere with a learner's ability to engage in the social and academic aspects of the school day.

Second, transition shock can hinder communication between the brain's hemispheres. Specifically, developments within the right brain can be suspended, stopped, or even reversed. These so-called stalls in the right brain can cause a domino effect that hinders language acquisition: Episodes of transition shock can overwhelm an individual, causing the brain to become stuck in elemental right brain functioning. When this occurs, the right brain is challenged to communicate with the left brain. This is problematic for our ELLs because language learning occurs primarily as a left-brain function. When access to the left brain is blocked, language acquisition is compromised.

From an instructional perspective, this is significant. Even with the best curriculum and learning strategies at our disposal, we cannot wholly meet the needs of our students unless we can address underlying issues related to transition shock.

How Can I Be Part of a Solution?

It's important to note that students' mental health is a serious and complex issue. As teachers, it's not our role to diagnose or treat such conditions. However, there is a lot that we can do to mitigate the negative effects of transition shock in the school setting.

Here are some important goals to aim for when creating a learning space that is sensitive to those impacted by significant stress. The good news is that these are beneficial for all students.

A calm, organized environment

For trauma-impacted students, safety and trust are essential foundations of learning. Environment is a large predictor of safety, so order, routine, and predictability are important to students with a history of transition shock.

TIPS

Post and make an effort to adhere to class schedules. Prepare students for schedule changes when possible. Organize classroom tools and supplies in labeled bins. Be sure that expectations (and corresponding consequences) are clear and consistent.

Crossing midline activities

Take short breaks for kinesthetic movements that traverse imaginary lines that divide the human body into quadrants, such as touching the right elbow to the left knee. These activities encourage communication between the brain's hemispheres and aid with emotional regulation.

TIPS

Take brain breaks: Have students practice drawing figure eights in the air or stretching the body in ways that cross the midline.

> *Stress embedded in this way can interfere with a learner's ability to engage in the social and academic aspects of the school day.*

Expressive therapy

Art, drama, and music therapy are among the most promising tools for trauma mitigation. In fact, research points to expressive therapy in the classroom as a way to lessen anxiety, encourage self-regulation, enhance cognition, practice mindfulness, and promote healthy integration. ELLs may especially benefit, as this encourages expression in the new language. These strategies can be embedded into lessons across grade levels and content areas.

TIPS

Engage students in creati ng a class mural related to a topic of study, using math blocks to create patterns, taking photos for a report, designing a webpage or music video related to a topic of study, or designing a building using only certain mathematical angles.

Seek out strengths

All students come to school with knowledge or wisdom based on their life experiences and prior schooling. As teachers, we're experts at recognizing and building upon students' unique interests, skill sets, and background knowledge. Learners with trauma backgrounds especially benefit from this intentionality, as it can increase both confidence in self and trust in others.

TIPS

Take time to honestly celebrate individual students' abilities. Offer consistent feedback and provide ongoing structured support. Provide opportunities for students to showcase their skills in ways that benefit others, such as problem-solving design challenges.

Children, regardless of circumstance, native language, or nationality, are remarkably resilient. Many who encounter adverse experiences are able to overcome them or learn to successfully manage their effects. As educators, we can create safe learning spaces and introduce strategies that mitigate the negative impacts of transition shock. In doing so, we become champions for the success of all students.

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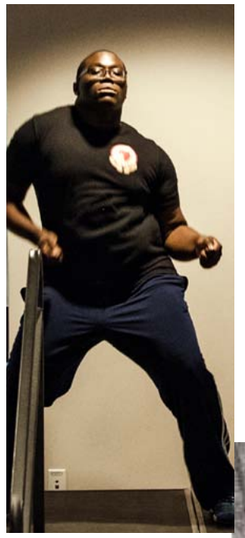
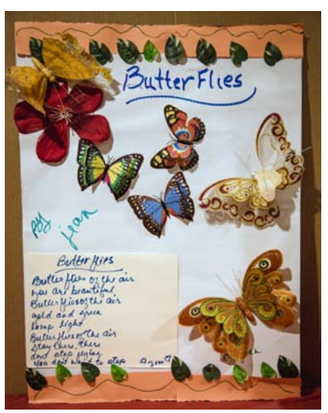
Gallery Walk 2018

The 2nd Gallery Walk of English Learners took place on April 5, 2018 in The Center at Moore Hall at Providence College. Sponsored by RITELL and the RI EL Advisory Council, the event featured students of all ages and dozens of nationalities showcasing identity texts in visual, literary, musical and performance media.





Bridging Worlds in Words and Art: The Language Journey of Ana Flores

Doug Norris

[Cuban-born, Rhode Island artist Ana Flores explores the relationship between the environment and culture in her work, while expressing a deep interest in how place and geography informs who we are. One of her recent artworks, Café Recuerdos, based on the Latino Oral History Project of RI, is a traveling installation featuring the stories of Latin American immigrants in Rhode Island. The work focuses on coffee as a memory catalyst. Stacked coffee cans on a traditional Cuban peddler's cart, which doubles as s temporary café, depict portraits of the Ocean State's Latino pioneers, painted by Flores. In 2016, the cart was stationed at Central Falls Library, which hosted ESL classes taught by R.I. Family Literacy Initiative staff. The following profile, edited from a classroom assignment I completed at Rhode Island College in 2013, traces the artist's early development as an English learner.]

Photo Credit Scott Lapham from www.networksri.org

IN 1962, Ana Flores left her native country of Cuba, flying from a world of color and heat only to land in a snowstorm at the Bradley International Airport in Granby, Conn. The 6-year-old girl looked out the window and thought "a giant eraser had rubbed out the landscape of my island...my lizards, my palm trees, coconuts, the puddles of shade to hide in" and the deep blue sky. She stared at her new world and saw nothing but "a blank white page."

She was starting over. New country. New climate. New language.

Flores had grown up speaking Spanish. In one month, she would be attending Kindergarten in a Connecticut school, where all of the children already spoke English. But she had an advantage over many other immigrant children in her situation.

"Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Roadrunner and Foghorn T. Leghorn," she said. "The first interest I had in learning English was listening to it on TV in the Looney Tunes cartoons. I had seen them all in translation growing up in Cuba. All of a sudden I was watching the same cartoons in English. I sort of knew the narrative, so I had an idea about what they were saying. I began to pick up on certain words."

For the first six years of her life, Flores heard and spoke Spanish, but she noted that Cuba, when she was a child, was "very Americanized," especially in Havana. English words appeared on items in the grocery stores. "We always associated English with good, fun stuff," she said. "Like the cartoons. Then Russian started coming in. It was a very different sounding language. A very different looking language. I can remember seeing Russian words in the stores, replacing the English ones."

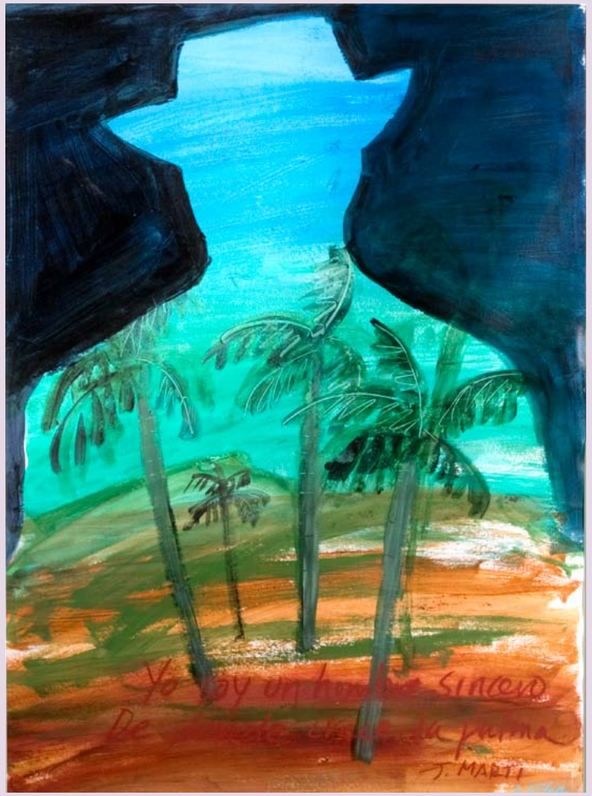
By the time she reached America, Flores already had some confidence in listening to and reading English. This was complemented by the example set by her parents, who immediately immersed themselves in the language when they arrived in America. Her mother took a quiet, scholarly, bookish approach, privately focused on reading, writing and speaking comprehension. Her father practiced frequently and openly, conducting oral recitations of Shakespeare and English translations of Spanish poets.

"I'd fall asleep listening to him speaking Shakespeare, not knowing what any of it meant, but just hearing those sounds and rhythms," Flores said. Well before attending school, Flores was exposed to the words, phrases, sentences and sound patterns of her new language at home, in the prevailing media and even, somewhat surprisingly, on the streets of Cuba. She remembers that while Spanish was still spoken in their house, a strong emphasis was placed on using English once her family settled in America. She was conscious of trying to fit in - "We were one of the few Hispanic families in Connecticut at the time" - but she believes she had an intrinsic motivation to learn the language that was stronger than any extrinsic motivation to succeed among her new American peers.

"I always enjoyed learning for the sake of learning," she said. "I was naturally curious. Still am."

Her home environment helped. English was continually reinforced at a time in life that research shows is critical for language learning. But even though she may have lagged behind some students in speaking the language, once at school Flores discovered that she was reading and writing at the same level as everyone else. If she did have trouble with a word, she had another advantage over her peers.

"From the very beginning, communication for me was always a combination of the verbal and visual," said Flores, who at age 60 is a successful environmental and cultural artist, with homes and studios in Hopkinton, R.I. and Nova Scotia. "That's why those cartoons were so im-



Pictured is Flores' 2004 acrylic painting, "Homenaje al Hombre Cubano/Homage to Cuban Man (For My Father)."

Scene from "The Dancers" (2004) by artist Ana Flores.

portant to me. I was always able to communicate visually, to get my idea across by drawing my way through. So if we learned how to write the word cat, I could draw a cat."

In fact, both in the classroom and outside of it, Flores was affirmed often by teachers and her fellow students for her drawing abilities. Students even lined up to get copies of her drawings. "That was important," she said. "It made me feel less of an outsider."

Flores has often explored the question of identity in her art (in conjunction with her environmentally-focused sculptures, paintings and installations). The notion of culture and identity is a constant, lifelong theme in her work, an inner journey of discovery for where she belongs in the world. Her ability to step outside herself and question who she is and what she is here for is something Flores remembers doing at an early age.

"I always knew I was from somewhere else," she said. "I knew I was different. I was treated well, and I think I adapted well, but I've always had this sense of forever being lost between islands."

In some cases, language reinforced that feeling, resulting in rare occasions when Flores experienced difficulty in learning English.

"I do remember that as I became more proficient in English, my Spanish vocabulary dropped, and as a family we started speaking Spanglish," she said. While the social distance between her two cultures - native and chosen - was breaking down, Flores had her first experience with language anxiety, when she realized that her acquired proficiency in Spanish created some trouble spots in English. In such situations, she practiced avoidance.

"Early on I was never able to say the 'th' sound," she said. "And I would never say 'peanut butter' because it always sounded like 'penis butter.'" Flores said she recalls the feeling that she could never quite master the language, because she couldn't pronounce every word properly. Over time, however, her worries about standing out "like a sore thumb" dissipated, since "people stopped teasing me about it."

Her formal schooling took a traditional path. She learned to read and write English in the standard way of the early 1960s, with an emphasis on memorization and rote practice. Even though she hadn't been listening to and speaking the language for as long as her peers, she found that she could keep up with them in the other competencies.

"Everything was Dick and Jane," she said. "Dick and Jane did this. Dick and Jane did that. Dick and Jane led a very boring existence."

Cuba and Rhode Island have both served as inspiration for artist Ana Flores.The wood for "Colonial Portrait" (2007) came from her property in Wood River Junction, Rhode Island.

In "The History of the Coffee Table," (2012) Flores presents an elegant glass table, displaying a silver coffee (or tea) set with sugar, the refined sweet product made from tortuous hours of slave labor. The table is propped by a bent and crouched figure of a black woman. The work relates directly to the artist's memory of Uva, a "tata" (nanny) and perennial childhood companion, but alludes more universally to the slavery and colonialism that infuses so much of Cuba's identity.

Today, as she has for the past half-century, Flores speaks, writes, listens and reads almost exclusively in English (except when she wants to revisit the Spanish poets). She said she still regularly mixes up certain idioms, indicative perhaps that a certain fossilization has occurred - although even native speakers commonly turn idioms into malapropisms.

"I'm always getting them slightly wrong," she said. "Like, 'the skin of our teeth,' is that the expression? Well, I might say, 'the skin of our nose' or something. Isn't there something about the nose? No skin off my nose? So much skin. Too many teeth. Too many noses. I never get it right."

Even though English is her primary language, Flores believes that her native language still influences her patterns of speech, suggesting some transference - not of words, but of the way she processes them in conversation and composition.

"Spanish is spoken differently from English," she said. "The pauses, the interruptions are different. I find myself using a lot of commas in my writing, hesitations in my speaking. My mind still thinks in a Spanish pattern."

This realization occurred to her during an epiphany when Flores went back to Cuba for the first time in 2002, 40 years after her arrival in America. She communicated mostly in Spanish, and found it easy to do so, despite getting the odd conjugation wrong. She also fell quickly into old habits.

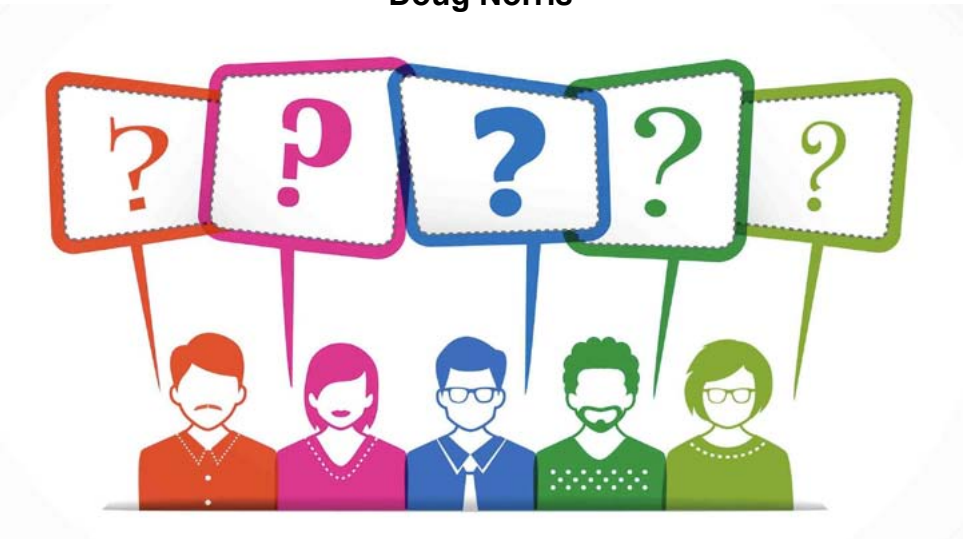
"I found that I dropped the last syllable at the end of a word," she said, describing a tendency of Cuban speakers of Spanish. "It just disappears. I do that in Spanish. Not in English. I was amazed that I just fell back into that so naturally."

In much of her artwork, she titles paintings, sculptures and installations in both Spanish and English. Her bilingual upbringing has influenced her entire life, and probably contributed to her academic and career success, since Spanish and English provide alternate avenues for communicating ideas and solving problems.

"Different words in different languages conjure different things," Flores said. "The translations aren't exact. Sometimes the title more fully expresses the spirit of the work in English. Sometimes the Spanish holds more resonance."

Questions

Doug Norris



Does breaking news ever get fixed?

If a bad car is called a lemon, what do we call a bad lemon?

How come people only offer a penny for your thoughts, but if you tell them, you're putting your two cents in?

Why do people advise gamblers to play the odds but not the evens?

How can three square meals be part of a well-rounded diet?

Is there anything a pole-vaulter wouldn't touch with a 10-foot pole?

Do people who go back to square one end up in a different place than people who go back to the drawing board?

If you subtract the lesser of two evils from the greater good, do you get a lesser good?

Ever notice that nothing feels slower than fasting?

In designing a building, which is more important – elbow room or wiggle room?

If you played backgammon backwards, would it be called frontgammon?

How come "abbreviation" is such a long word?

Why can something be lukewarm but not lukecold?

If two weeks is a fortnight, then shouldn't two months be a fortweek?

Can someone born with a silver spoon in his mouth speak with a forked tongue?

Why are there half-truths but no half-lies?

How come a vague place is called "somewhere" but a vague time isn't "somewhen?"

If the shoe fits and you wear it, does that mean that you won't have to wait as long for the other shoe to drop?

Why is most hot sauce served cold?

When golfing or bowling in Spain, does body English work, or would you need to learn body Spanish?

After you swallow your pride, how are you supposed to digest it?

Why are people so easily lost in thought but not so easily found there?

Has anyone ever looked up the word "dictionary" in the dictionary?

Why do we seek public opinion but not public fact?

If the consequences become clearer on second thought, what would happen if we waited until seventh thought?

Why isn't there a gesture for the word "gesture?"

Whether you see the glass half-empty or half-full, isn't the more important question, "How big is the glass?"

Editor's note: Some of these observations originally appeared in the author's "Flotsam & Jetsam" column for Independent Newspapers of Southern Rhode Island.