

## *Welcome to Our Schools* Curriculum

The CCSD ELL Division is grateful for the generosity of The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance for providing us the rights to share their *Welcome to Our Schools* curriculum with our teachers. This curriculum was developed for New York Teachers of Refugee students. With this in mind, there are a few lessons that we will be offering adaptation suggestions to address the needs of Newcomer students living in Clark County.

When deciding what modules to teach, keep in mind who your students are and what they need to learn about being in a U.S. school. As they state in their materials, “Instructors should review the Modules and select the materials that would be most relevant to the refugee students (CCSD Newcomers) enrolled in their school system, and most useful when designing lesson plans and classroom activities.” Also, you may have English-speaking students who do not qualify as ELLs who could benefit from the acculturation pieces of this curriculum. A student coming from England speaks a different English and can experience culture shock as they begin living in the U.S. Please use these materials, as they seem appropriate for these students as well.

Please review pages 4-8, Background for Instructors. As you read any of these materials, remember that the authors are in New York, and programs mentioned do not align to CCSD programs. Reading considerations are also attached for you to review before reading each module. We are providing these materials as a starting point for you to be able to develop lessons to meet the acculturation needs of your Newcomer students. Thank you for looking at these materials. The CCSD ELL Division welcomes your feedback on this curriculum as we are offering it to our schools for the first time this year. If you have any questions or need additional supports for your Newcomer students please reach out to our Division at (702) 799-2137. Also, please look at the materials and links specifically provided to address newcomer needs found on our website at [ell.ccsd.net](http://ell.ccsd.net). Most schools have an ELL Student Success Advocate. These staff members receive additional training from the ELL Division and can also act as a resource for you.

## CCSD CONSIDERATIONS

### Module 5: So Much to Learn!

#### In this reading...

When it says ...	Think...
refugee	newcomer
Refugee Academy	school site
academic coach	mentor

- If you include salad activity, please make sure to look at allergy information for all students prior to the lesson.
- Videos are not available at this time.
- *Welcome to Our School Kit* is not available at this time. See your ELL Coordinator for purchasing options.
- *Welcome to Our School* posters are not available.

# WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOLS



**BUREAU OF REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT ASSISTANCE**

**NEW YORK STATE OFFICE  
OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE**

**REVISED 2011  
ANDREW M. CUOMO, GOVERNOR**

The Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG) *Welcome to our Schools*, which includes Refugee Academy and Mini-Academy Curricula, Parent and Professional Development Programs, a Guide to Academic Coaches, a Guide to the Videos, and the videos *Refugee Student Interviews*, *Refugee Parent Interviews*, *A Day in Elementary School*, *A Day in Middle School* and *A Day in High School*, was developed by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (OTDA/BRIA).

Funding for RSIG *Welcome to Our Schools* came from the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement's Refugee School Impact Grant Program, funding opportunity number HHS-2010-ACF-ORR-ZE-0083.

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**MODULE 5**  
**SO MUCH TO LEARN!**

## **MODULE 5: So Much to Learn!**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of Module 5 is to inform students about the range of learning opportunities in American schools.

### **OBJECTIVES**

*Students will:*

- Recognize that the purpose of school is to learn, regardless of the setting or activity
- Become familiar with common American knowledge and traditions in American schools
- Understand the valuable contributions of refugee students to American schools



### **SUPPLIES**

***Handout 5 – 1:  
School Calendar***

**Current world map**

**Globe**

**United States map**

**Tossed salad**

***Welcome to Our  
Schools*** poster for  
each student

**Videos:**

***Refugee Student  
Interviews and  
A Day in School***  
(Elementary, Middle  
or High School)

**School calendar**  
(See Activity #3)



## **MODULE 5: So Much to Learn**

### **VOCABULARY**

#### **Elementary Vocabulary**

Country  
Map  
Globe  
Tossed Salad  
Welcome  
Holiday  
Vacation  
Learn  
Calendar

#### **Secondary Vocabulary**

Country  
Map  
Globe  
Tossed Salad  
Welcome  
Contribution  
Vacation  
Learn  
Calendar  
Melting Pot  
Tolerance  
Holiday



## Key Points – So Much to Learn!



### **1. *Regardless of the activity, the purpose of school is to learn.***

Students who are new to America may be so enamored with all of the entertaining activities of American schools that they may not realize that for every activity there are many educational objectives. The purpose of Module 5 is to remind students that, although there are many interesting activities offered by American schools, the underlying intention of all of them is for students to be able to learn.

Teachers emphasize “content” and “process” in all subject areas, encouraging students to build knowledge and skills, while learning how to solve problems, tackle issues critically, make sound and rational decisions, build social skills, and express opinions with confidence.



For example, activities on the athletic field not only teach students about the rules of a sport, but they help students understand how teamwork and communication work and how it is important to practice and develop skills. In a lab, it may be fun to carry out science experiments with a partner, but students are also learning scientific principles and concepts, lab techniques, problem-solving, and other skills such as graphing, charting, and statistics.

New students who have never experienced any of these activities may see them only as an opportunity to socialize and enjoy the school day. However, if this enthusiasm is coupled with an understanding of the purpose of school, the result can be better success in the American education system.

Of course, not every subject will be stimulating for all students, and refugee students will soon discover that there are activities that are routine and repetitive, and teachers who are unimaginative and boring. It is important to explain to new students that they will find activities that are fun and exciting, and activities that are tedious or demanding. For all of those activities, however, students are expected to work hard to learn something new.

It may be necessary to encourage students to expand their horizons and try new subjects and activities. They may be afraid to participate



in class or join a club because they are uncomfortable with their classmates, or afraid because they have never experienced the activity before. Once students grasp the concept that everything they do in school is a learning experience, they may be more willing to seek many different ways of gaining knowledge.







## **2. Knowledge and traditions can be common to all Americans.**

There are commonalities that connect American school systems. Basic curriculum and school traditions are generally the same across the country. Every school in the country includes English Language Arts or Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics in their curriculum. In general, the schools across the nation hold student assemblies, science fairs, band concerts, and pep rallies.

One tradition that is consistent across the country is the school calendar. Across the nation there are students who have summer vacations, national holidays, conference days, and winter breaks, when school is not in session. The dates may vary slightly, but the patterns are the same.

Students in the Refugee Academy should not only be aware of the traditional school calendar, but should understand why there will be days when school may be canceled. Suppose, for example, that they are not aware that in some districts they do not go to school on “snow days” “Yom Kippur” or “Good Friday.” Students and their families need to be forewarned.



In Module 5 the instructors can go through the school district calendar with the students, explaining national holidays such as Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. They can explain why some days are “half-days” so that teachers can attend training sessions, and parents can meet with teachers.



Students may be confused about long winter breaks or religious holidays. Instructors can discuss the holidays authorized by the school district, and how families might celebrate during those holidays. They can discuss how students can spend their school vacations during the year, and in the summer.

In the elementary grades the students may have the opportunity to learn more about national holidays as part of the academic curriculum. However, at the secondary level it is often assumed that students know why school is cancelled for holidays such as “Presidents’ Day” or “Labor Day.” Module 5 familiarizes students with the school calendar so that they and their families can be prepared.



## **3. Refugees contribute to a multicultural America.**

It is essential that students in the Refugee Academy be aware of how much *they* contribute to American schools.

The emphasis in the Academy is refugee students becoming acclimated to American schools. It is equally as important to point out what refugee students bring to their classrooms. Students in multicultural classrooms have a better chance of developing global awareness, appreciation of diversity, better understanding of the freedoms of American life, and tolerance of other religions and cultural traditions.

# ACTIVITIES

## **ACTIVITY #1: VIDEOS**

Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (45 minutes)



Show the videos ***Refugee Student Interviews*** and ***A Day in School*** (Elementary, Middle, or High School) to provide information and to help students to understand that there are many different ways to learn in American schools.

- Use the ***Guide to the Videos*** for introducing the videos and for follow-up discussion.

## **ACTIVITY #2: STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS**

Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 - (45 minutes)

### **In this activity:**

The students will learn that they make significant contributions to American education.



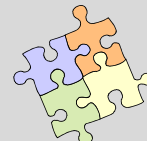
They will discover that they can teach their fellow students about global events and diversity of cultures. They can help students develop appreciation for the world outside their classrooms.

Students in the Refugee Academy can **maintain pride in their culture** while learning about how to connect different cultures in their new classrooms.

Begin by **making a tossed salad** in front of the class. Add one ingredient at a time, asking the students why the salad represents American schools. Point out the value of multicultural classrooms, and the contributions that the Academy students can make to American schools.



### **Discussion Questions**



#### **What can you tell me about the country that you came from? Where is it and what did it look like?**

- Stress the landscape, size, and location, rather than political and social activities. Students will inevitably mention current events in their countries, perhaps with graphic details. When they do, ask them about the terrain in their native countries and changes in the environment because of current events. Emphasize the variety of environments that they have come from.
- Point out how interesting it is that people from all over the world ended up in one classroom.
- Find the countries on a globe or a world map.



### **How many countries are we from – in this room right now?**

- Mark the location of the classroom on a map of the United States.
- Instructors can share information about personal cultural heritage.

### **What does this country look like?**

- Describe urban/rural/suburban environments.
- Describe the cultural diversity of the United States.
- Students may bring up how American students dress and talk, and what they are interested in. Address the difficulties that refugee students may face in maintaining their cultural traditions while trying to fit into their new environment. Discuss the importance of pride in heritage. Acknowledge that some students may want to cast aside native dress, foods, or other traditions. Ask students how they can fit in with American students and yet stay connected with their personal heritage.
- Students may encounter misconceptions and stereotypes when interacting with their peers. They may have to answer a lot of questions about their background and culture. They may also be confronted with strong negative reactions to refugees in America. Discuss how these attitudes can be handled by refugee students.

### **What has surprised you about this country? What do you dislike about it? What do you like?**

- Accept the observations of the students. Explain that they may change their minds in the future, and should be careful not to judge.
- Ask how students plan to enjoy what they like about America.

### **How do you think American students can learn from you?**

- ✓ World view
  - ✓ Knowledge of geography
  - ✓ Tolerance for diversity
  - ✓ Overcoming resistance, prejudice
  - ✓ Understanding of current events
  - ✓ New languages
  - ✓ New ideas, experiences
- Ask students to describe specific things that fellow students can learn from them.

### **How do you say WELCOME in your language?**

- Demonstrate American greetings (*hi, howdy, greetings, hello, how are ya, etc.*), role-played by instructors. Ask students to share “*hello*” and “*welcome*” in their native language. **Distribute the *Welcome to Our Schools* poster for all students to take home.**

## **ACTIVITY #3: SCHOOL CALENDAR**

**Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12 (60 minutes)**

### **In this activity:**

The students will learn about the calendar of the school year.

They will be preparing a **school calendar** to post at home.

They will also learn about American holiday traditions, and the reasons behind the cancellation of specific school days.

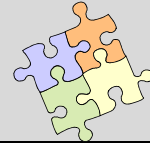


### ***Distribute Handout 5-1: School Calendar***

- Provide each student with a marker or pen.
- Go through the calendar slowly, month by month, pointing out half-days of school, holidays, vacations, testing days, etc. Include the first day of school.
- Show students how to mark each day with a circle or symbol.
- Discuss the details of holidays and vacations:
  - National – President's Day, Thanksgiving, etc.
  - Religious – Christmas, Hanukkah
  - Community Events – parades, festivals, fireworks
- Discuss vacation activities
  - Relaxation
  - Vacation camps
  - Reading and study time
  - Extracurricular programs
  - Child care
  - Supervision of siblings
  - Lack of supervision of older students



## Discussion Questions

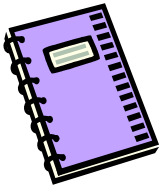


**What holidays or special occasions will you celebrate with your family?**

**How will you spend your time during your holidays and vacations when you are not in school?**

**How will you stay safe, especially if you are home alone or supervising siblings?**

**How will you continue to learn when you are not in school?**



## JOURNAL TOPIC

### Grades K-5

Draw or write about what you think you will learn about in school. What can other students learn from you?

### Grades 6-8

Draw or write about how students in school will be able to learn from you. What will you do if they are resistant or not interested?

### Grades 9-12

Draw or write about how you will keep the traditions of your native country, but also learn from your new country. What are you most interested in learning about?



## SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Read aloud children's books from the *Welcome to Our Schools* kit that show how students adapt to the American way of life while maintaining their cultural traditions.

- Make a “tossed salad” with the class, representing everyone in the Academy.
- Invite future classmates to visit class and hear about the environment of the native lands of students of the Academy. Prepare visitors for details that may surprise them and/or make them uncomfortable. Find the countries on the globe or map of the world.
- Attend local events, festivals, or celebrations as examples of American traditions. Prepare students for the celebration of holidays in the beginning of the school year.
- Provide brochures, flyers, and Websites about national celebrations.
- Instructors may want to teach students the Pledge of Allegiance, explaining that students across the nation are reciting it every day in school.